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CHAPTER 66
THE GREAT PALACE

SUNPU CASTLE BOASTED SEVEN STORIES AND THREE MOATS.
IT WAS THE LATE TOKU-GAWA IEYASU'S MOST BELOVED CASTLE.
WHEN LORD IEYASU WENT THERE IN HIS RETIRE-MENT,
PEOPLE REFERRED TO SUNPU CASTLE AS,
THE GREAT PALACE.

BEHIND SUNPU'S INNER CITADEL,

A DUNGEON WAS ESTAB-LISHED,

NOT FOR PUNISH-MENT,

BUT FOR THE LORD'S ENJOY-MENT.

WAS WONDERING WHY SHE WAS BEING PUNISHED,
AND SHIV-ERING.

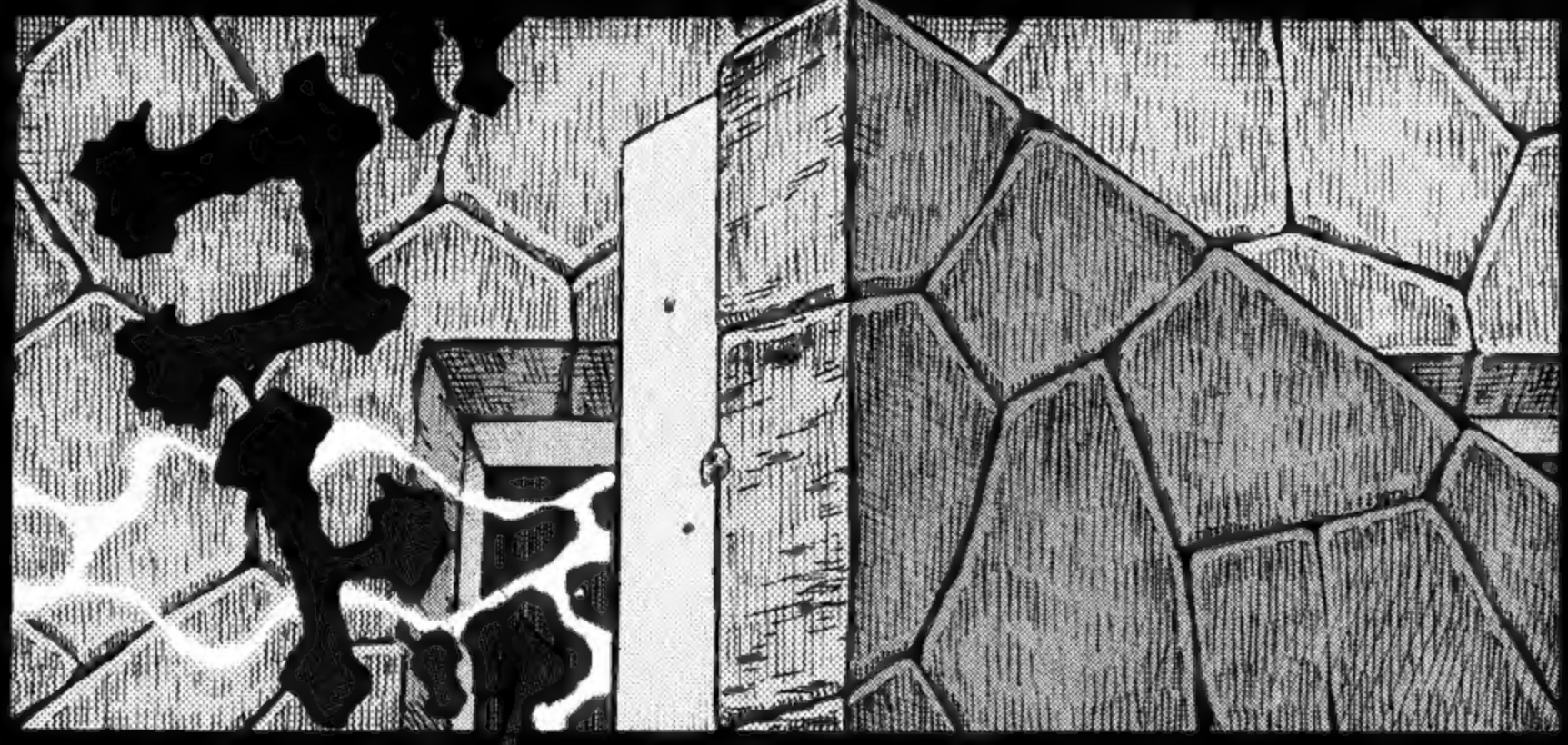
WITHIN THESE PRIVATE ROOMS,
YAE,

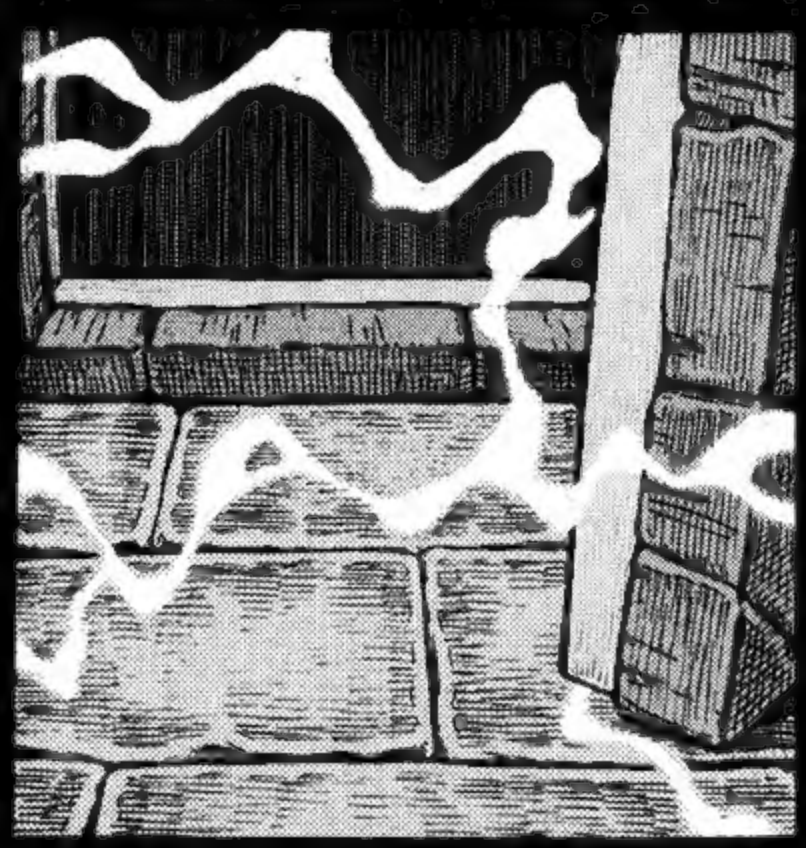
THAT A MAN-EATING APE WAS KEPT SOMEWHERE IN SUNPU CASTLE.

IN THE BACK OF HER MIND, SHE RECALLED TERRIFYING RUMORS,

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL,

SHE COULD HEAR A LOW MOAN.



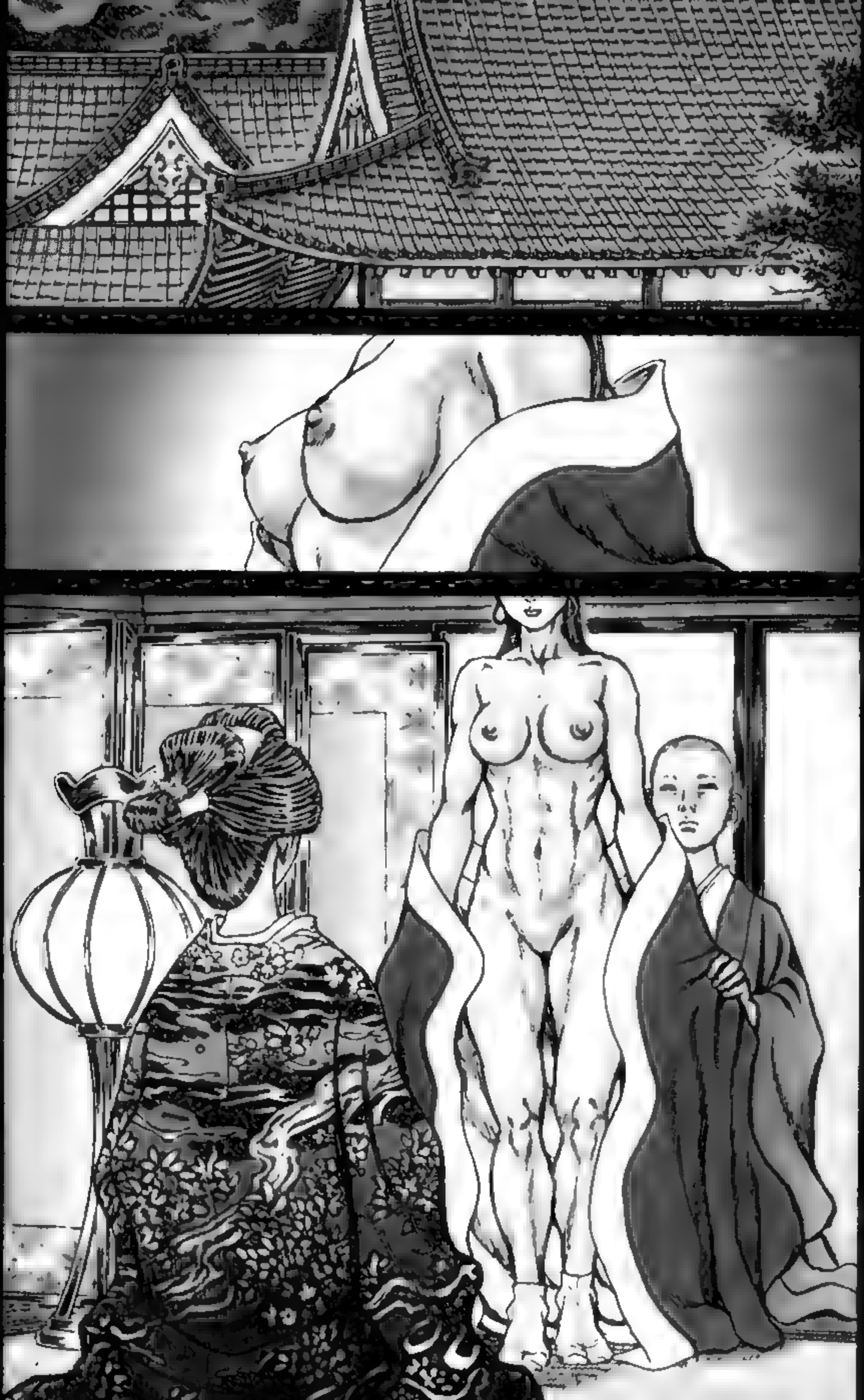


GAZING ON THIS REPULSIVE SCENE,

LORD TADA-NAGA'S EXPRES-SION,

GOLDFISH IN A GARDEN POND.

III



HAD BEEN ORDERED TO ATTEND TADANAGA IN HIS BED CHAMBER.

FOR KUTSUKI GANNOSUKE, WORD OF THE MURDER OF SASAHARA SHUUZABUROU'S

SUNPU CASTLE,

WHEN TADANAGA INQUIRED FOR A WOMAN'S NAME,

THE GIRL'S NAME?

OR A BATH ATTEN-DANT,

OR A LADY-IN-WAITING,

WHETHER SHE WAS A NOBLE-MAN'S WIFE,

OR DAUGH-TER,

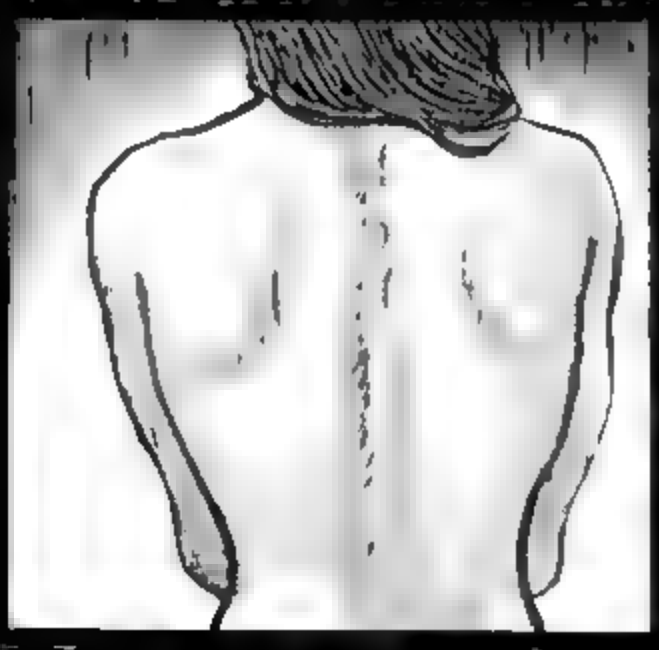
IT WAS NECESSARY TO PREPARE HER AT ONCE TO WAIT UPON HIM.

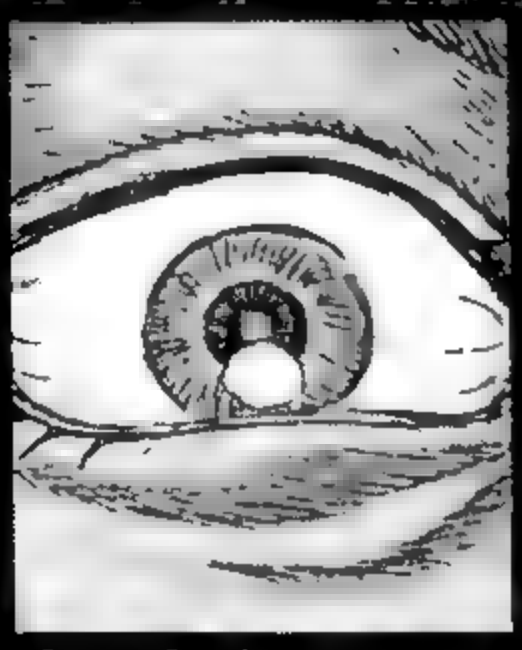
What an honor...

UPON HEARING THE REPORT, HER FATHER WEPT TEARS OF JOY.

SEGAWA SANZAE-MON, A SERVANT IN SUNPU CASTLE,

INFORMED CHIKA THAT SHE WAS TO PROCEED TO TADA-NAGA'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS.





CHIKA'S AREA CHANGED TO THAT OF A BOY.

BUT FOR TADANAGA, THAT WAS NO PROBLEM

A LORD WHO COMMANDED 550,000 KOKU,

WAS IMPOSSIBLE

ALTHOUGH SHE WAS MONSTROUSLY STRONG,

TO PUSH ASIDE A BLOOD RELATIVE OF THE LATE TOKUGAWA IEYASU,

THE DAINAGON OF SURUGA DOMAIN,

TOKUGAWA TADANAGA,

WAS THE YOUNGER BROTHER OF THE CURRENT SHOGUN, IEMITSU,

BUT HE DID NOT RESEMBLE HIS FATHER OR HIS BROTHER

HE TOOK AFTER HIS MOTHER, OEYO,

THE YOUNGER SISTER OF YODOGIMI,

ADMIRED FOR HER MATCHLESS BEAUTY.

HOW-EVER, BEHIND THOSE EYES,

LURKED AN UNNATURAL ANIMOSITY ...

THE YOUNGER SON OF HIDETADA THE SECOND SHOGUN TADANAGA'S CHILDHOOD NAME.

WAS KUNI-CHIYO

AT THE TIME PRIMOGENITURE WAS NOT THE RULE

IN INTELLECT AND GOOD LOOKS,

HE FAR EXCEEDED HIS ELDER BROTHER TAKECHIYO

ALL THE DAIMYO FOLLOWED SUIT,

AND PAID EFFUSIVE TRIBUTE TO THE YOUNG LORD KUNICHIYO.

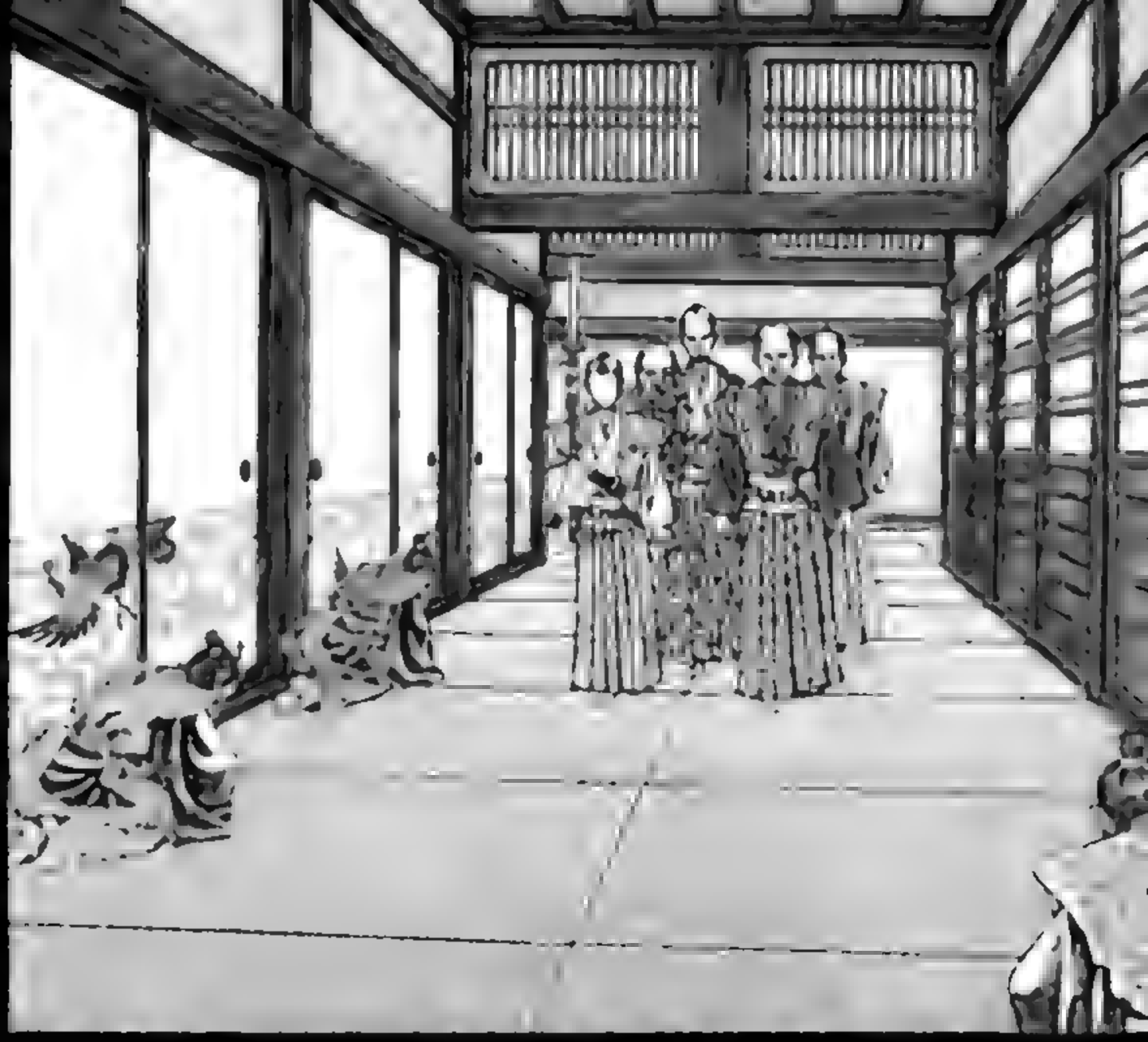
HIS MOTHER, OEYO,

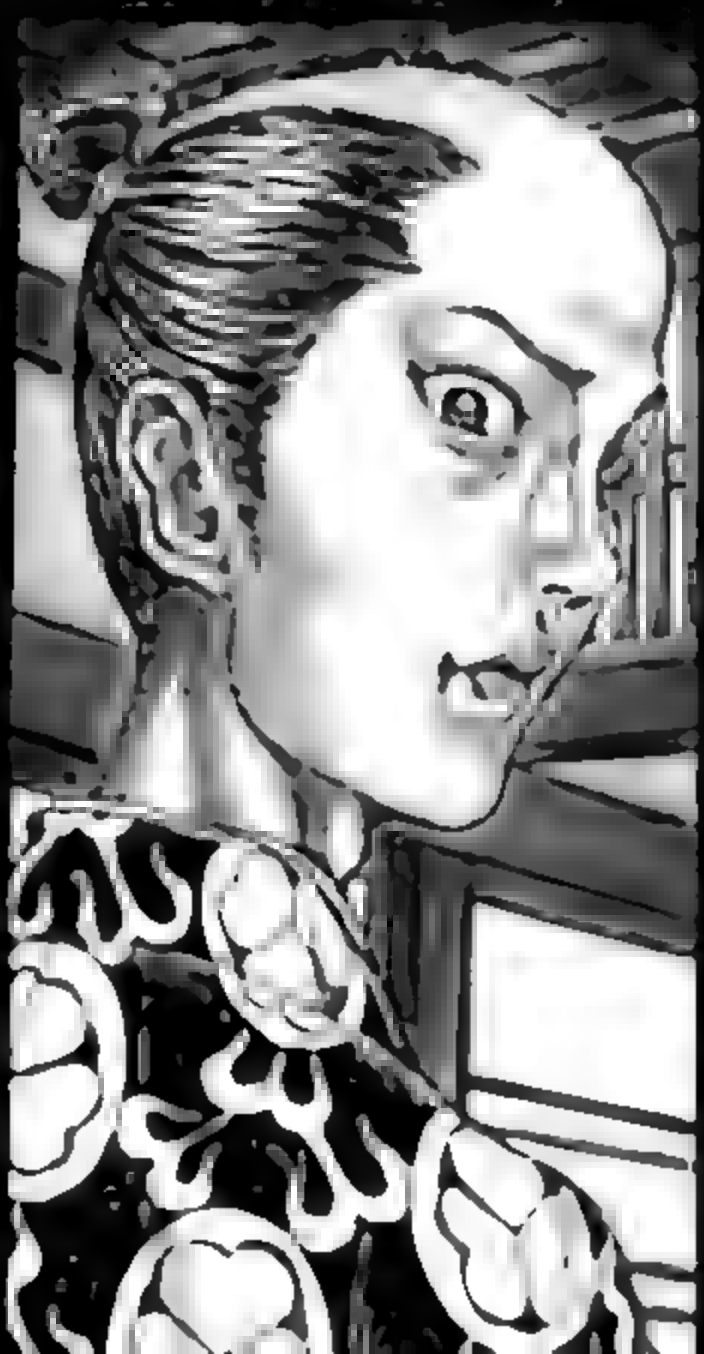
THOUGHT KUNICHIYO WOULD SUCCEED HIS FATHER AS THE NEXT SHOGUN,

AND DOTED ON HIM EXCES-SIVELY

AS A CHILD, ALL TADANAGA EVER SAW BEFORE HIS EYES,

WERE PEOPLE PROS-TRATING THEM-SELVES





HAVE YOU GONE MAD?

THE MAN HOLDING HIM BACK

WAS AN AIDE-DE-CAMP

THE DARKER MAN

WAS A DISTANT RELATIVE NAMED ARIYAMA SAMURAI

WAS AN AIDE-DE-CAMP VASSAL NAMED [illegible] NOBE

MY LORR.. PLEASE STAY BACK...

A traitor?

DISRUPTING

IS THE

THE

BASIS OF

RANKING

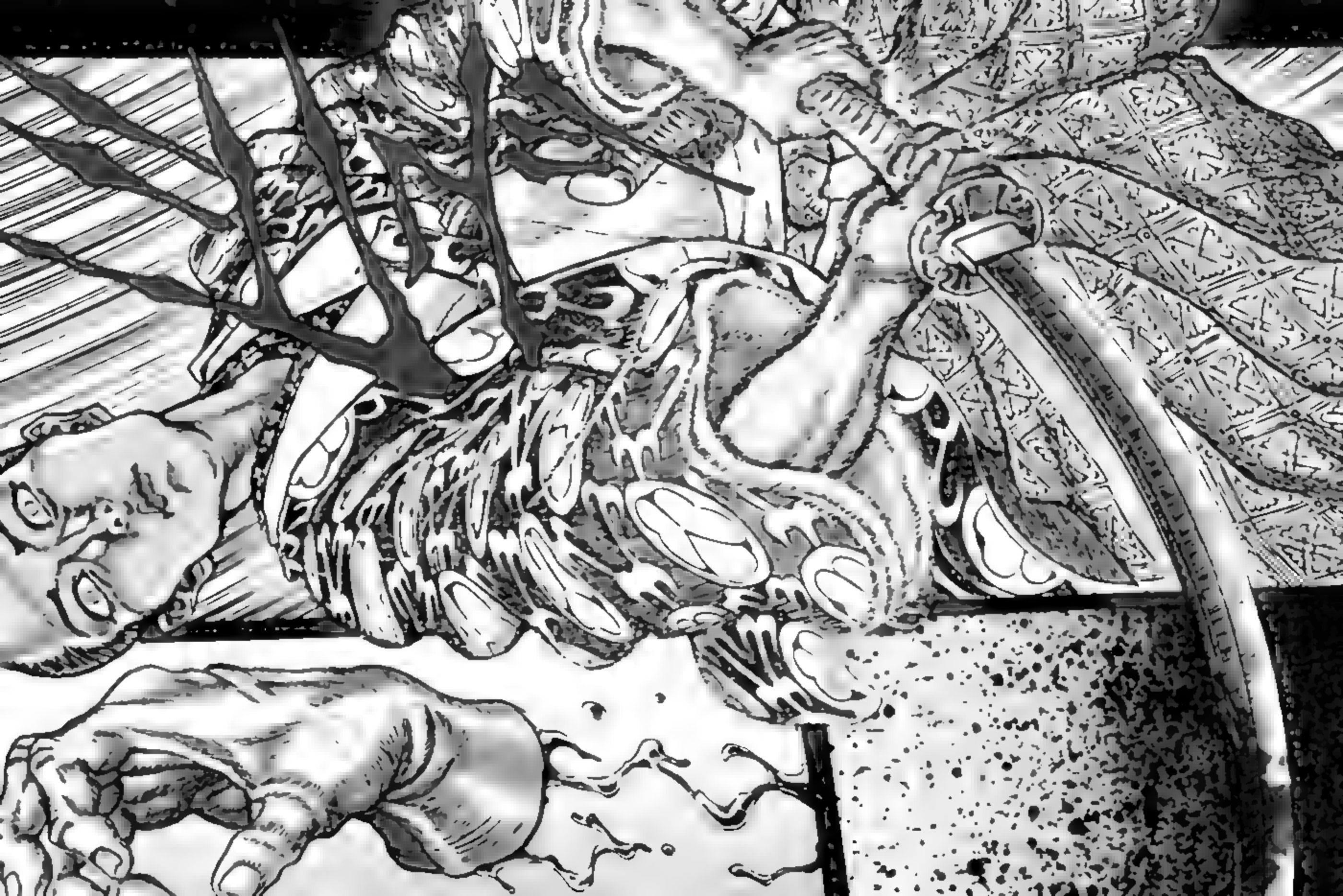
DISORDER

OF YOUNG

IN A CLAN

AND OLD,

THIS WAS THANKS TO THE SCHEMING,



TADANAGA, WHO HAD RECEIVED A CERTIFICATE IN THE ITTOU-RYUU STYLE,

FROM THE SURUGA DOMAIN FENCING INSTRUCTOR, HYOUGA HANBEI MASAHISA,

DID NOT BELIEVE IN HOLDING BACK FOR ANY REASON.

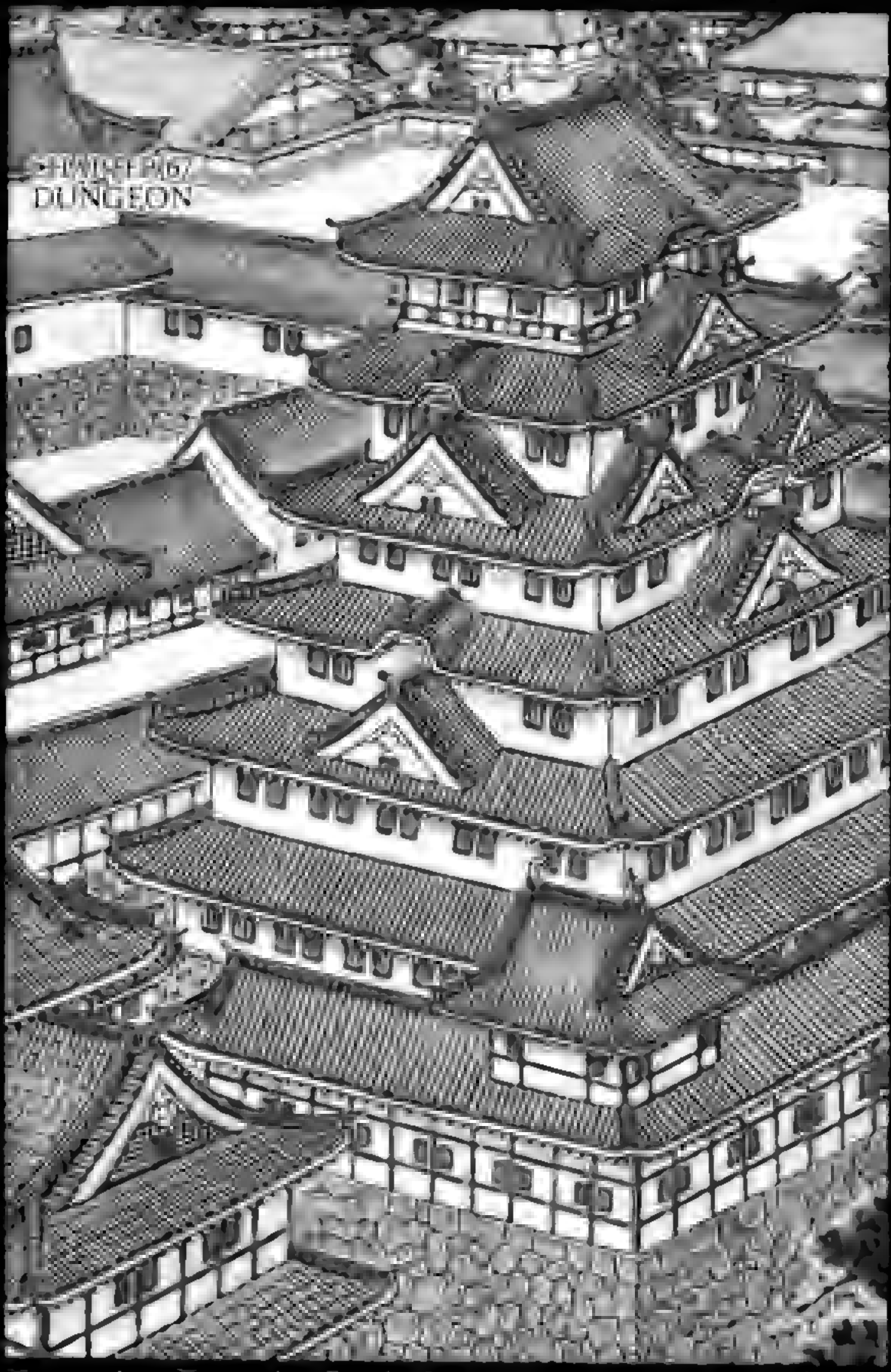
Ma-
gnifi-
cent.

THE SPOILED CHILD HATED,

HAVING THE POSITION OF SHOGUN STOLEN FROM HIM IN RETALIATION, HE TOOK FOR HIMSELF.

THE LATE IEYASU'S MOST BELOVED.

SUNPU CASTLE..


CHAIRED
DUNGEON

ONE DAY IN CAHLARY

IN FRONT OF THE CHAMBERLAIN SAKUSA OF ZEN WHO HAD BEEN SUMMONED TO THE CASTLE

A SINGLE WARRIOR PERSISTENTLY TRAINED HIMSELF

HOW GOES IT?

HOSHIKAWA

UNTIL HIS APPEARANCE IN THE TOURNAMENT AT SUNPU CASTLE.

: IS BEYOND MY POWER

: CAN'T KILL

FUJIKI

TWO DAYS LATER

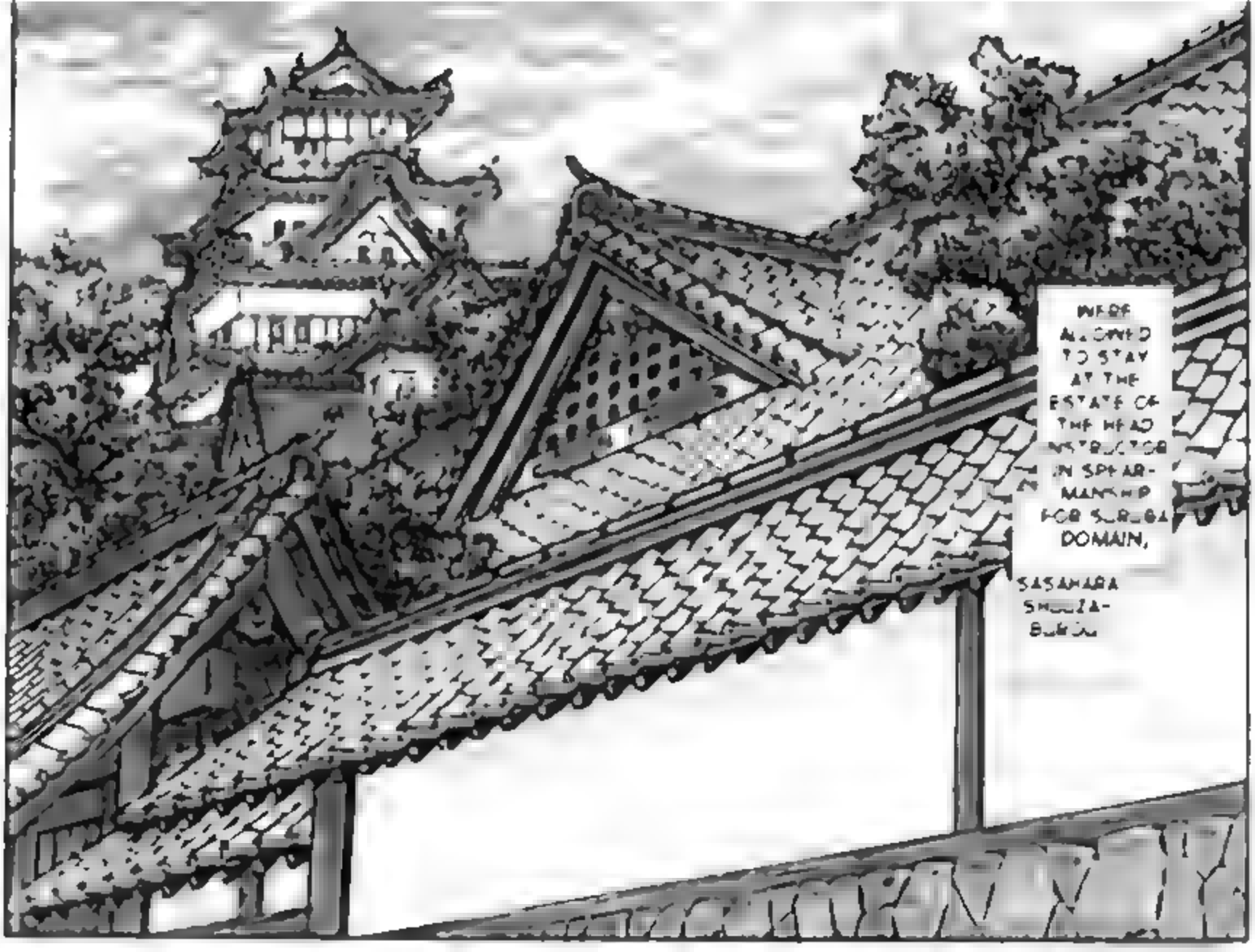
PALAN-QUINS WERE ORDERED TO THE TODA-RYUU DOJO

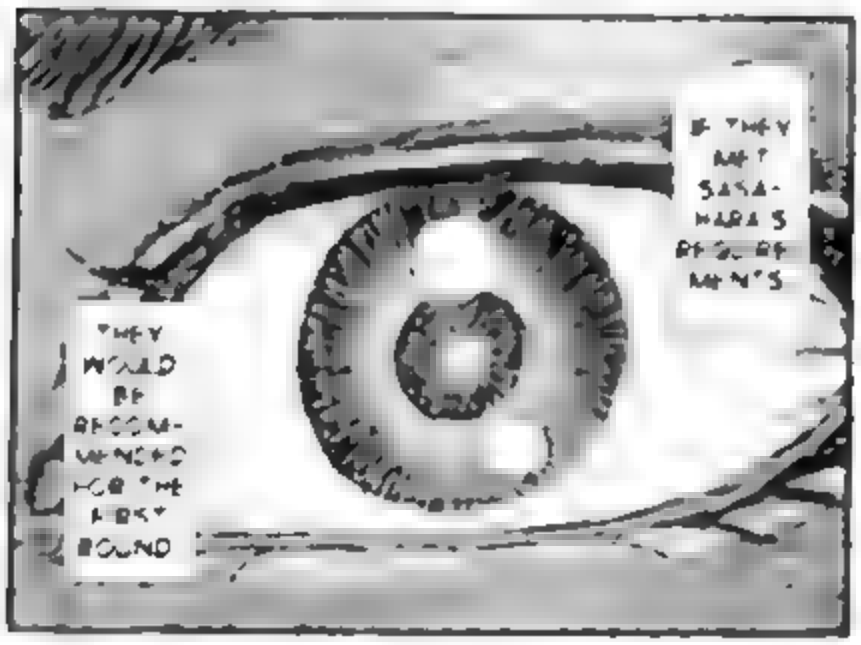
A PALANQUIN WAS A PRIVILEGE ONLY FOR THE HIGHEST CLASSES

AS A LOW-RANKING SAMURAI, IT WAS GENNO-SUKE'S FIRST TIME TO RIDE IN ONE

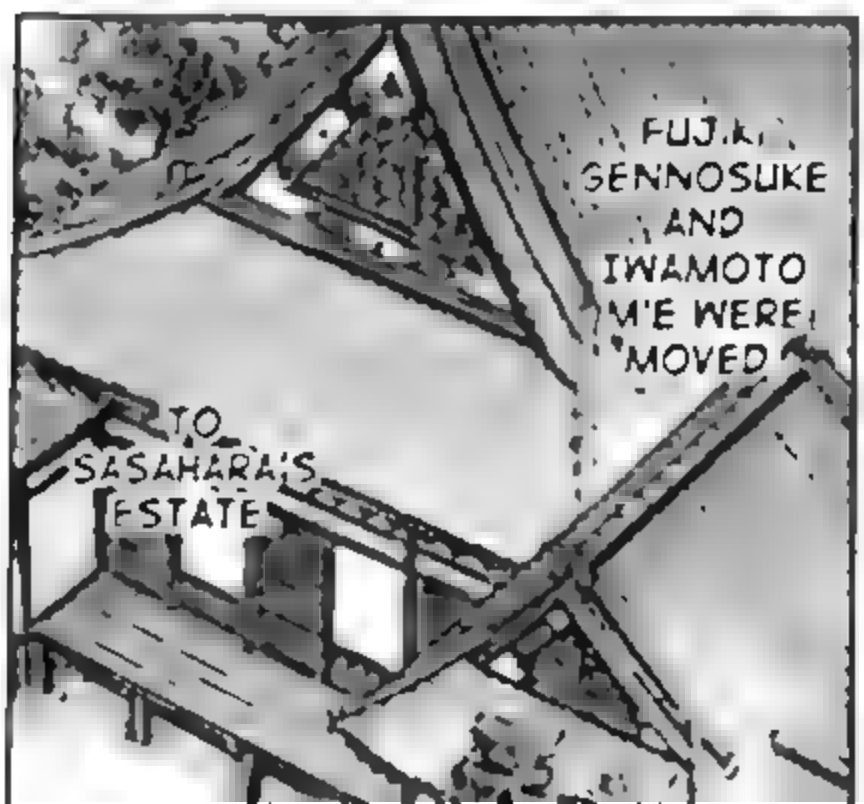
"Seeking the most skilled samurai throughout the realm"

SINCE THE [redacted] TADANAGA, GAVE THIS DECREE,


WERE ALLOWED TO STAY AT THE ESTATE OF THE HEAD
IN SPEAR-MANSHIP FOR SURUGA DOMAIN,
SASAHARA SHUZA-EMON


IF THEY MET SASA-HARA'S REQUIRE-MENTS
THEY WOULD BE RECOM-MENDED FOR THE NEXT ROUND

AFTER BEING EXAMINED FOR RESPECT-ABLE APPEAR-ANCE
AND HAD AFTER


FUJIKI GENNOSUKE AND IWAMOTO M'E WERE MOVED
TO SASAHARA'S ESTATE

I AM SASAHARA SHUUZABUROU.

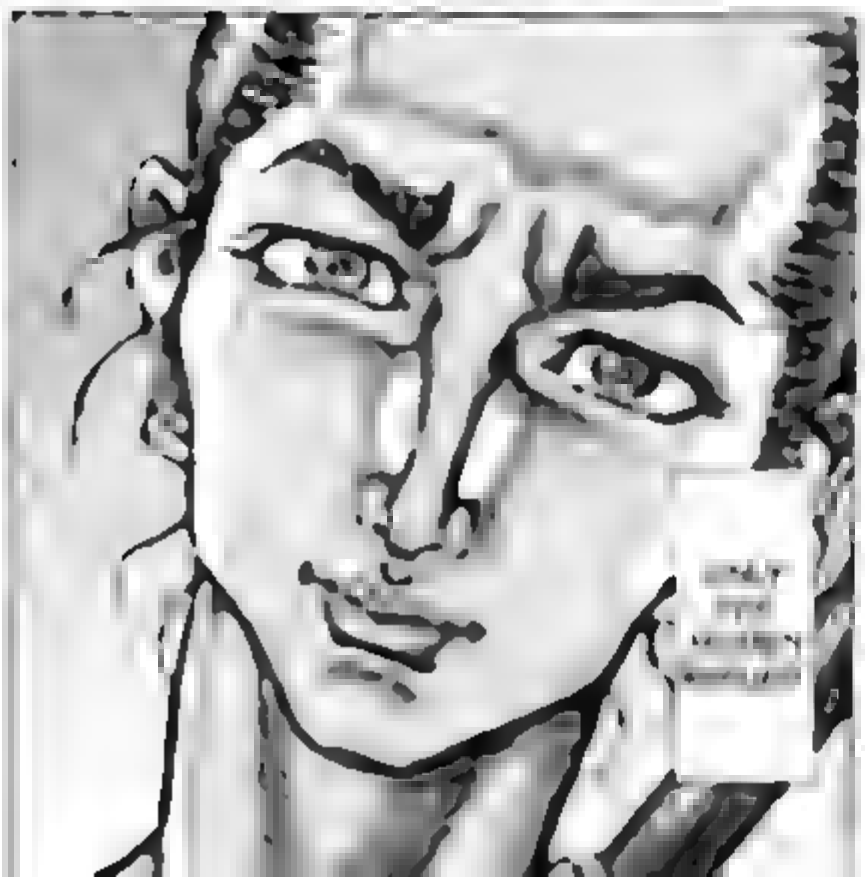
COULD STRIKE FROM A SURPRISINGLY FAR DISTANCE.

THE LONG ARM, LIKE A WHITE SNAKE.

FUCK!!
DOG.

THERE ARE MANY RONIN STAYING HERE WHO PRIDE [illegible] ON [illegible]

LET'S ALL
GET ALONG TOGETHER.



AN HOUR LATER

AT THE COTTAGE THAT HAD BEEN PROVIDED FOR ME AND GENNOSUKE.

A YOUNG SAMURAI CAME CALLING

FUJIKI GENNOSUKE-DONO!

MY NAME IS INOMATA SHINGO. I'M SASAHARA'S STUDENT.

WILL YOU SPAR WITH ME?

ONLY IF YOU RECEIVE SASAHARA-SAMA'S PERMISSION FIRST.

WHEN YOU MEET A FAMOUS PERSON, YOU SHOULD GO AHEAD AND REQUEST A LESSON.

SASAHARA-SENSEI ALWAYS SAYS,

ALL THE SWORDSMEN ON THE ESTATE,

ARE SAYING THAT THE KOGAN-RYUU SCHOOL IS VERY STRONG.

THE CARELESS YOUTH BLURTED THIS OUT,

TO THE SILENT GENNO-SUKE

THE SAMURAI IRAKO SEIGEN,

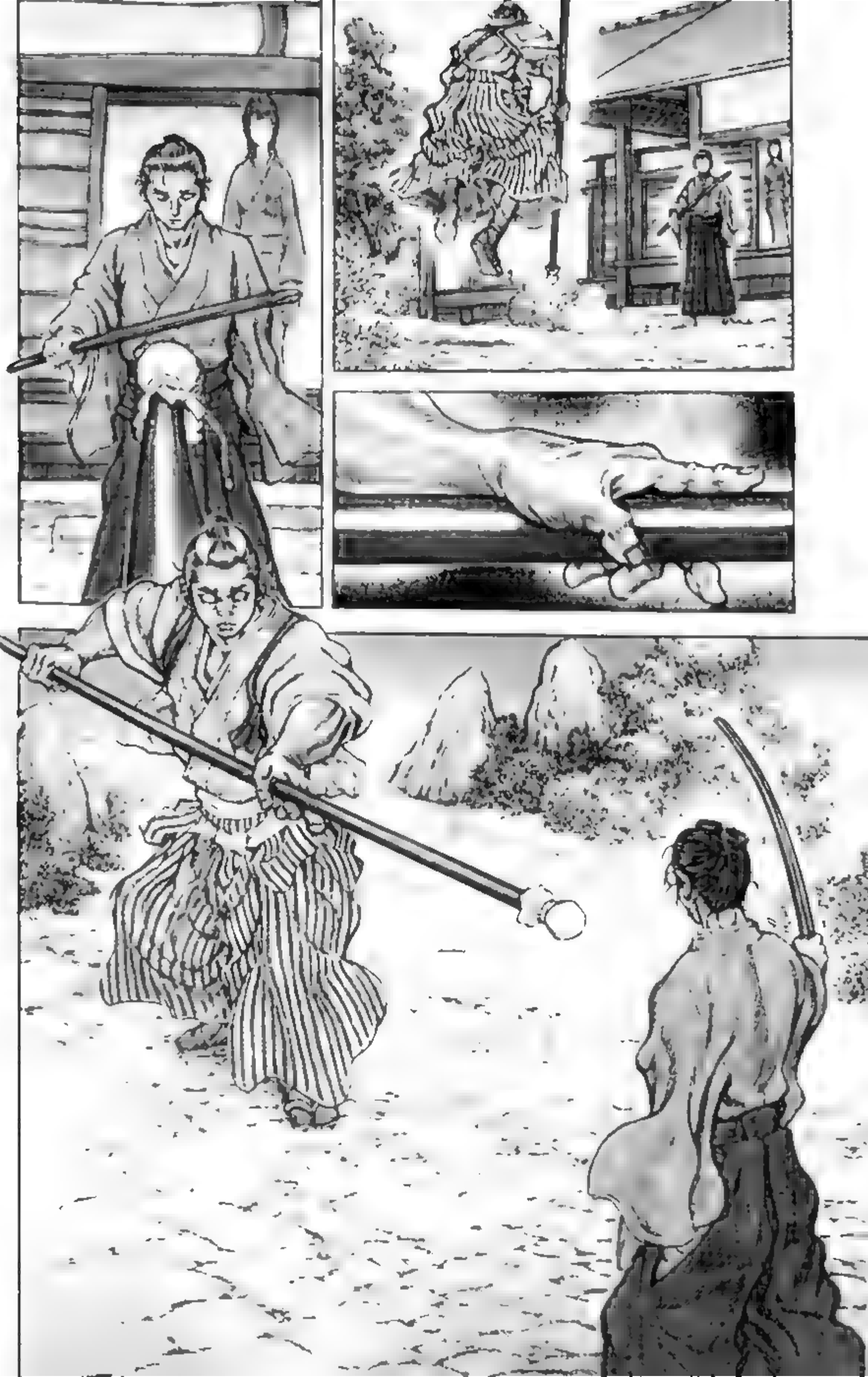
MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF BY DEFEATING THAT STRONG KOGAN-RYUU SCHOOL.

IT'S AMAZING HOW FAR HE'S RISEN.

GET ME A WOODEN SWORD.

I, FUJIKI GENNOSUKE OF KOGAN-RYUU.

SHALL INSTRUCT YOU



AND WITH ONLY THE RIGHT ARM.

HOW CAN HE PARRY A THRUST?

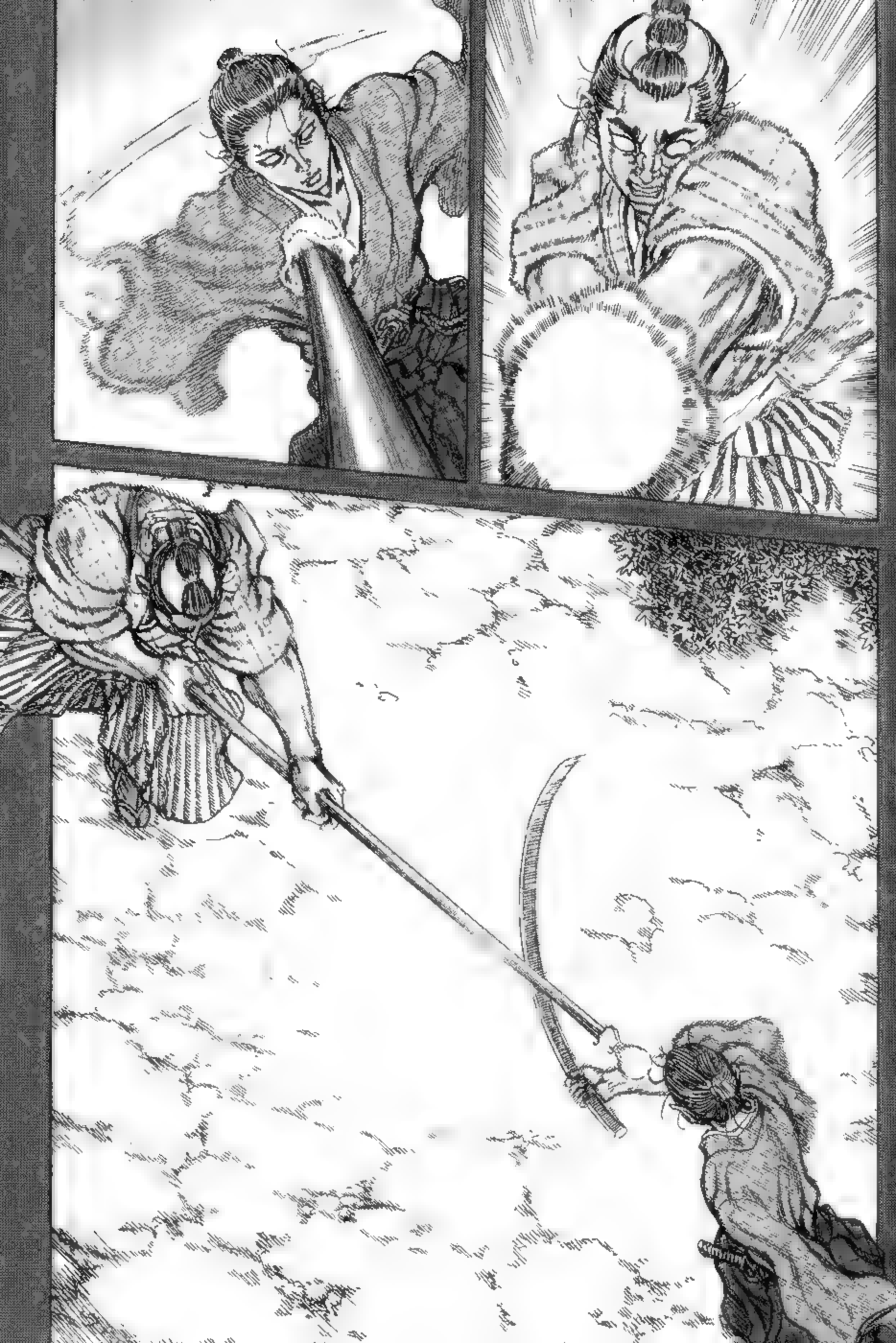
A WOODEN SWORD? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!

A SPEAR IS FOUR TIMES LONGER THAN A SWORD!

IT WAS NOT MERE ARROGANCE

A SPEAR CAN THRUST AND STRIKE,

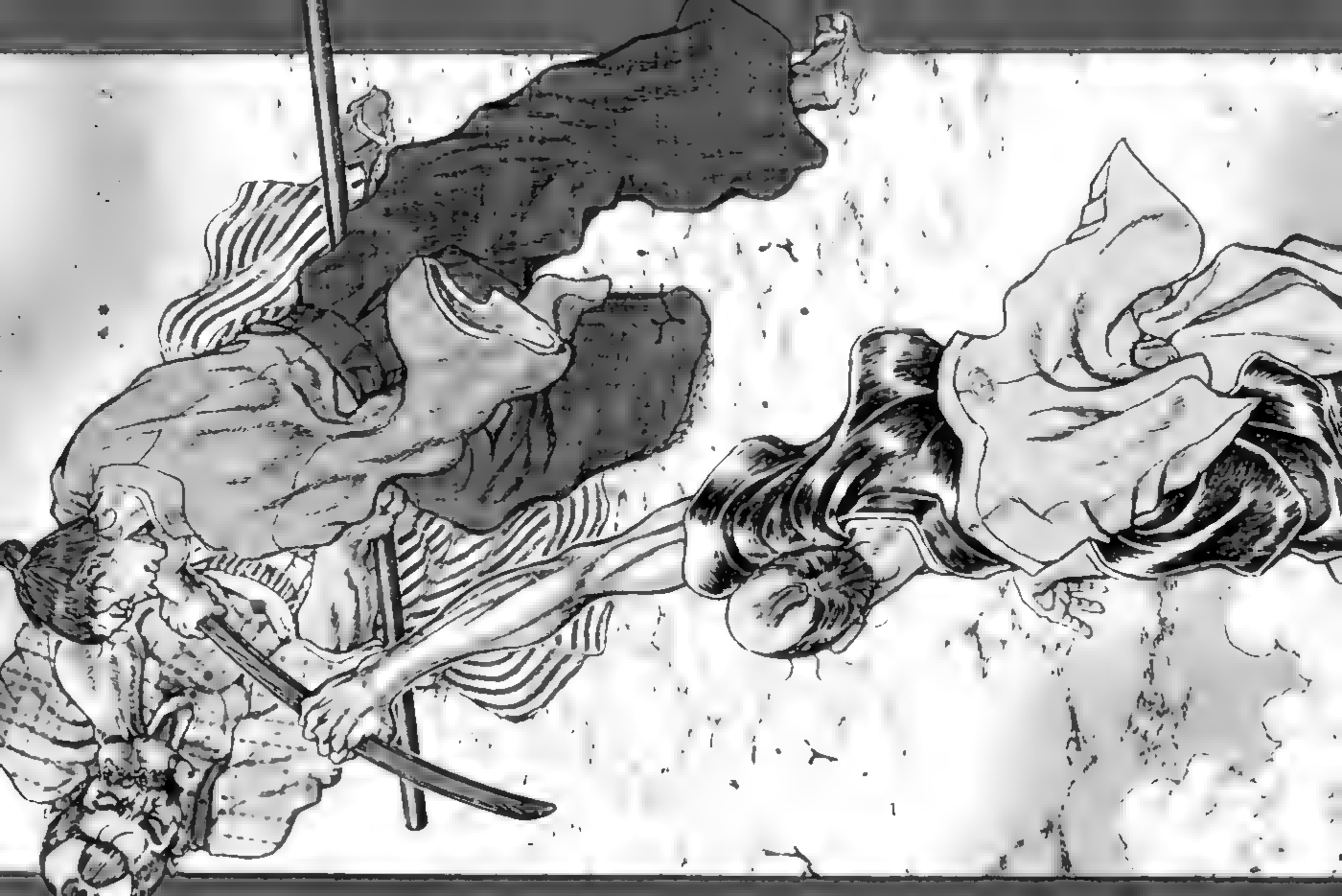
WHERE A SWORD CANNOT REACH



THE DISTANCE POSED NO HINDRANCE

DUE TO THE TIGER'S SUPERNATURAL SPEED.

GENNOSUKE READIED FOR A SECOND STRIKE TO "BEAUTIFY" HIM



YOU FOOL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!

NEITHER GENNOSUKE NOR MIE OFFERED ONE WORD OF APOLOGY

HE'S JUST A CHILD!

HE SEEMS TO HAVE NO DESIRE TO RISE IN THE WORLD.

EMPLOYING FUJIKI GENNOSUKE AT THE CASTLE,
IS IMPOSSIBLE.

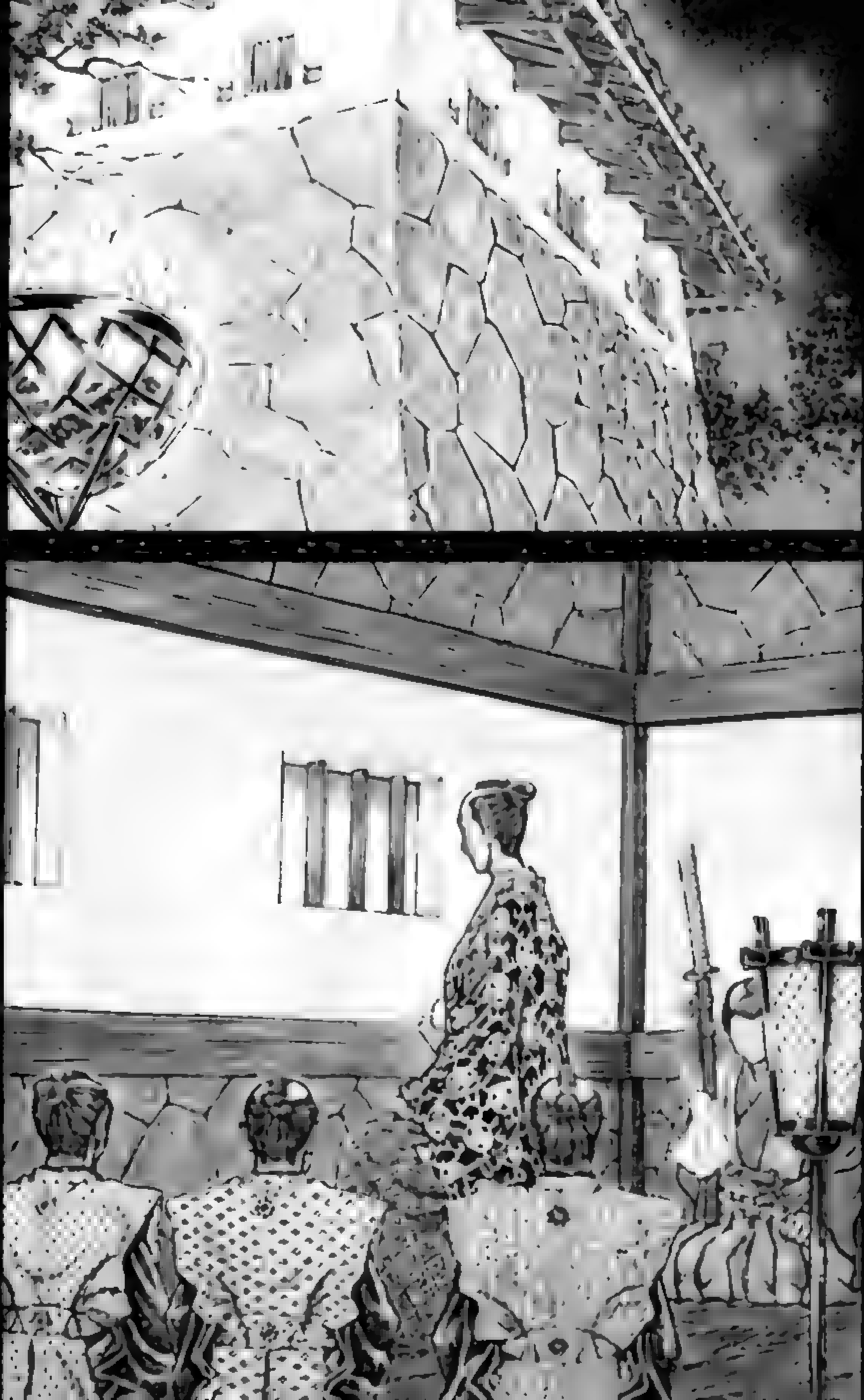
The only thing that man has in his heart

is to defeat Iraka Seigen at the Sirou tournament

That's all

AS OUR LORD'S FAVORITE.

I WONDER WHETHER HE WILL SURVIVE UNTIL THE TOURNAMENT



TO THE
DUNGEON,

TO
PUNISH A
CRIMINAL.

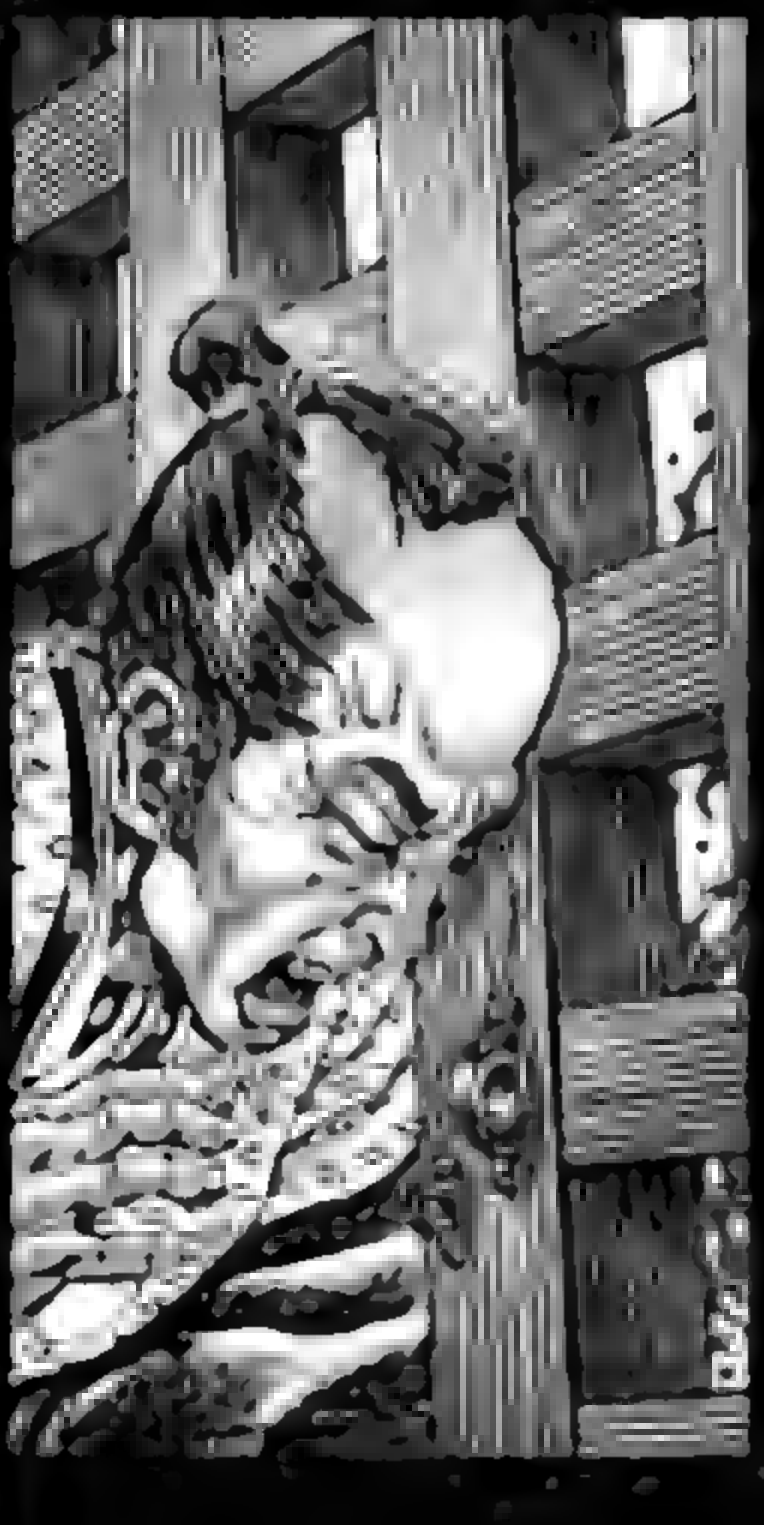
CHAPTER 03

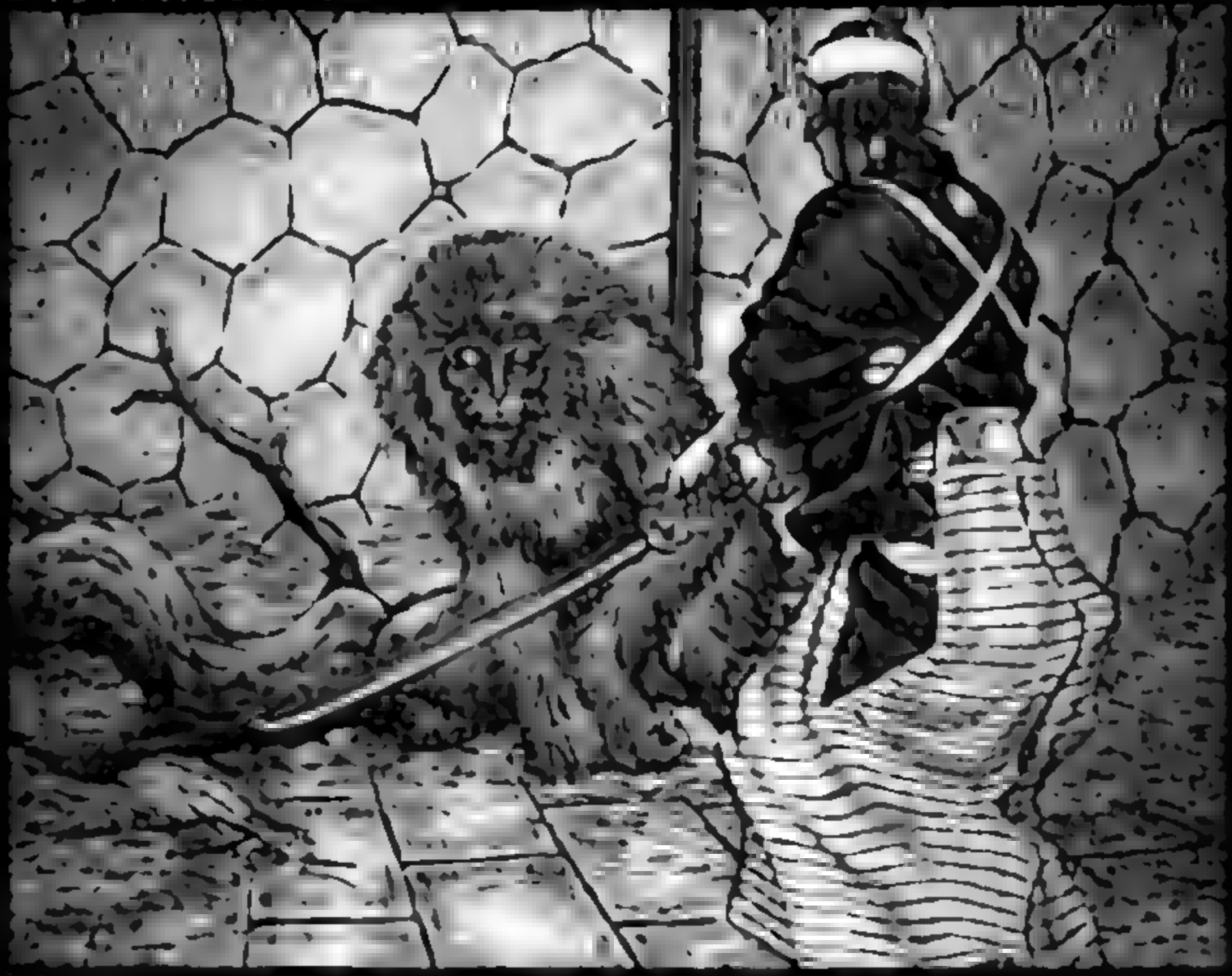
ESCAPE

ape or
baboon,

HE HAD DISCOVERED THIS GIANT APE

AND BROUGHT TO SUNPU CASTLE.



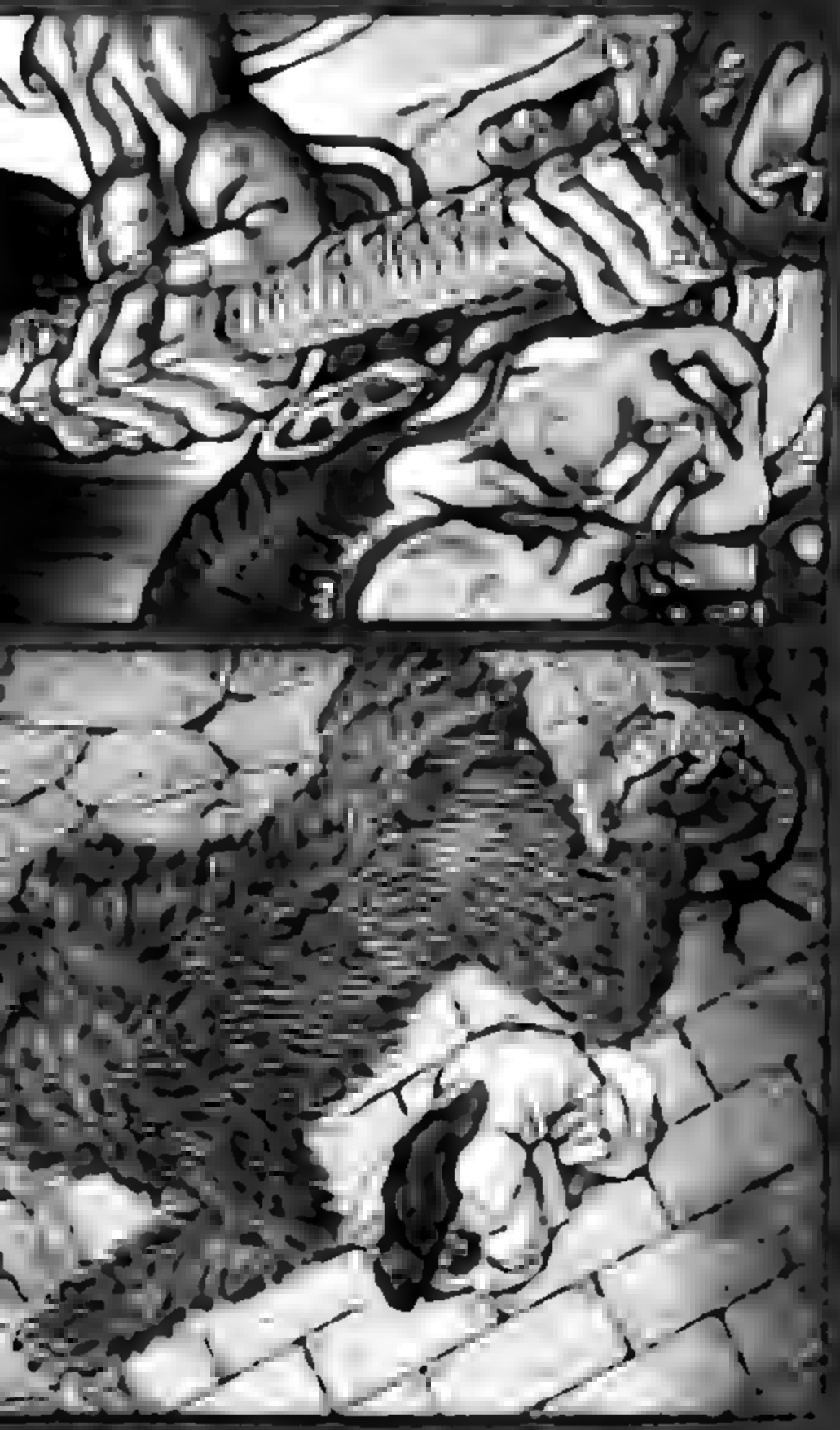


IF HE WERE NOT KILLED WITH ONE BLOW,

WERE LIKE ARMOR

HIHI'S THICK FUR AND STRONG BONES,

THERE WOULD BE NO TIME FOR A SECOND



THROUGH TO THE SPINE

THE BEAST IN HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO KILL

HE HAD SEVERED THE BONES OF THE AGILE HERCULEAN BEAST

WAS THE CLEFT IN HIS RIGHT FOOT

HOW WAS YOUR LATEST OPPONENT?

SEIGEN

SEIGEN TAKEMIYA OF ITO

SAKAKIBARA SHUZAEMON

IF THE BLIND SWORDSMAN, UNABLE TO SEE HIS

HIHI WAS

IT

MUSASHI TOSHIRO

INDEED!

MY OPPONENT,

WAS UNCOMMONLY BLOOD-THIRSTY.

WAS AN UNRIVALED MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS.

YOUR OPPONENT, LIKE YOURSELF,

NOGATA-KYUUZAEMON

COULD YOU SEE WHAT SORT OF MARTIAL ARTIST HE WAS?

TELL US, SEIGEN.

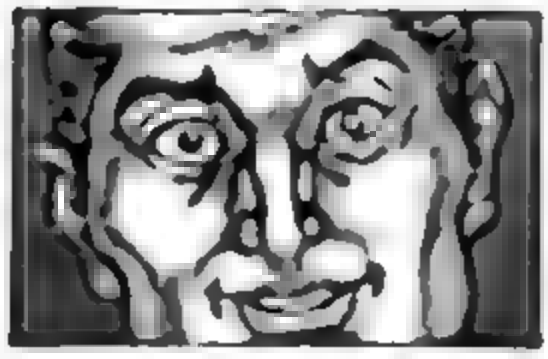
A NINJA ...?

SO CLOSE! NOT QUITE A NINJA...

WELL THEN, SEIGEN, WAS HE STRONGER THAN THE TIGER YOU DEFEATED IN KAKEGAWA?

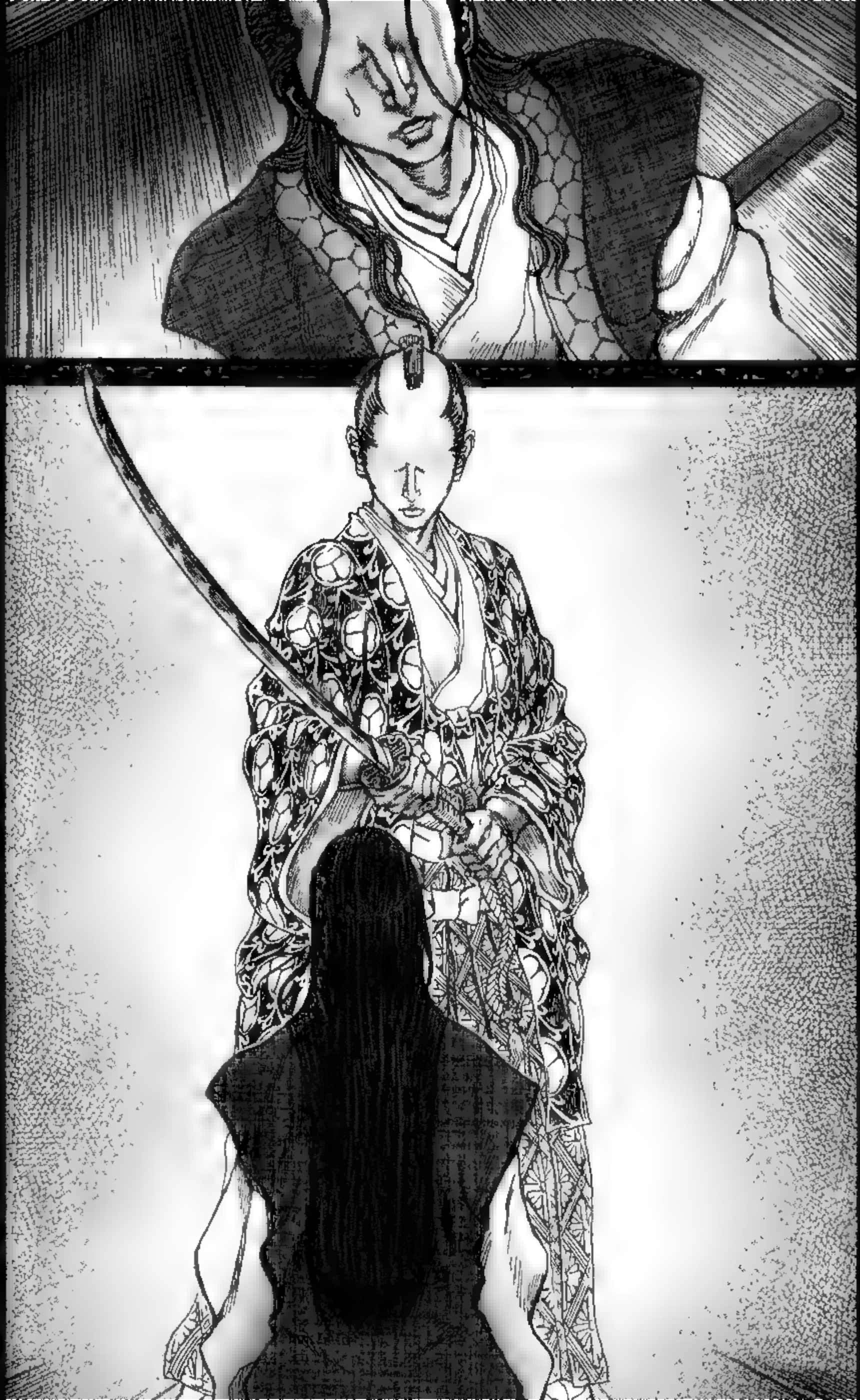
AS A SMILE ROSE TO TADA-NAGA'S LIPS,

THOSE AROUND H.M BURST OUT LAUGH-ING



HE CANNOT BE COMPARED TO A PERFORMING MONKEY.
THE ONE I DEFEATED IN KAKEGAWA IS A TIGER AMONG TIGERS.

MY SWORD



DRAW.

TO DRAW ONE'S SWORD WITHIN THE CASTLE WAS A CAPITAL OFFENSE

TO LOCK BLADES WITH ONE'S LORD WAS ALSO A CAPITAL OFFENSE!

SEIGEN WAS ENTIRELY WITHOUT RECOURSE

IT WAS FORBIDDEN

I CANNOT.

DRAW.

I CANNOT TURN MY SWORD AGAINST YOUR HIGHNESS.

TADA-NAGA TURNED PALE

IN AN IN-STANT,

"YOUR HIGH-NESS"

THE SHOGUN IS IEMITSU IN EDO.

With all due respect,

"YOUR HIGH-NESS,"

WAS A TERM TO INDICATE THE CURRENT SHOGUN

Behind these eyelids I see your true status, my lord.

These blind eyes can see what is invisible

No, not I alone.

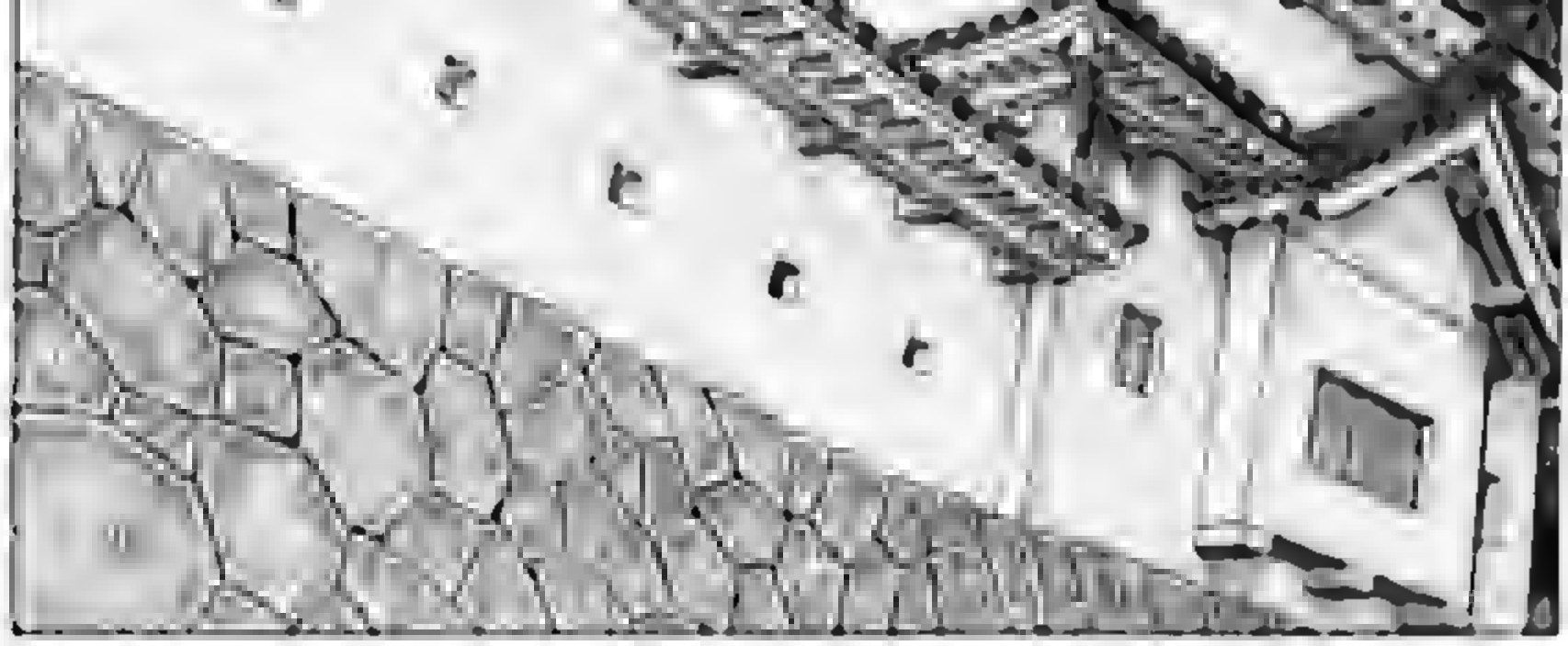
GATHERED HERE AT SUNPU CASTLE...

BUT ALSO IN THE EYES OF THE THOUSANDS OF RONIN.

Are you accusing me of treason?"

*That is, a coup d'état

IT WAS
A
TREASON



TRAINED
SOLDIER

WHETHER YOU RAISE YOUR ARM OR YOUR VOICE.
THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND THAT ONE WITH THE SULLEN FACE.

THE
SASAHARA
ESTATE

SHUU-
ZABUROU
HAD
SUPPLIED
HIM WITH
A KIMONO,
BUT THE
SLEEVES
WERE TOO
LONG,
AS IF
TRYING TO
CONCEAL HIS
FESTERING
HEART.

CHAPTER 49

DEMON WITH A SPEAR

IKU HAD BEEN STAYING AT TSUKIOKA YUKINOSUKE'S MANSION BECAUSE SHE FEARED HER PRESENCE MIGHT BE A HINDRANCE TO THE SUCCESS OF HER BELOVED'S CAREER.

A GOOD MARRIAGE EXCEEDED MARTIAL SKILL AS A SHORT-CUT TO SUCCESS

WITHIN SAMURAI CULTURE.

AS A LOCA-TION FOR A TRYST,

IT WAS RATHER DREARY

THIS DAY,

IKU HAD RECEIVED A LETTER FROM SEIGEN,

SUMMONING HER TO AN ABANDONED SHRINE AT MIDNIGHT.

PUT OUT THE LANTERN.

SEIGEN-SAMA, YOU LOOK A BIT THIN.

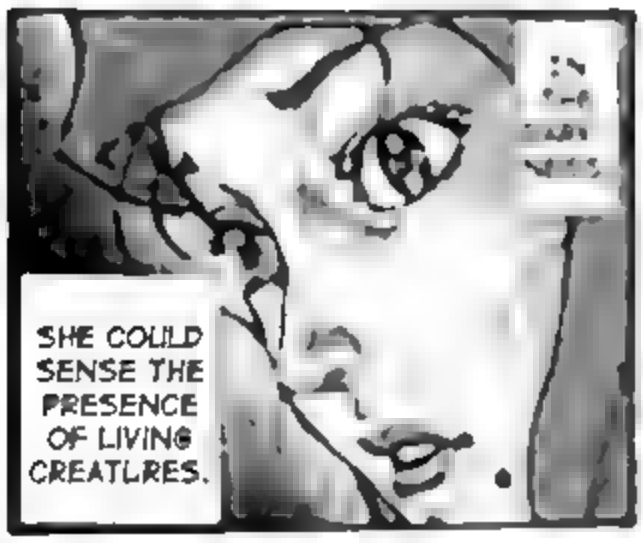
SEIGEN

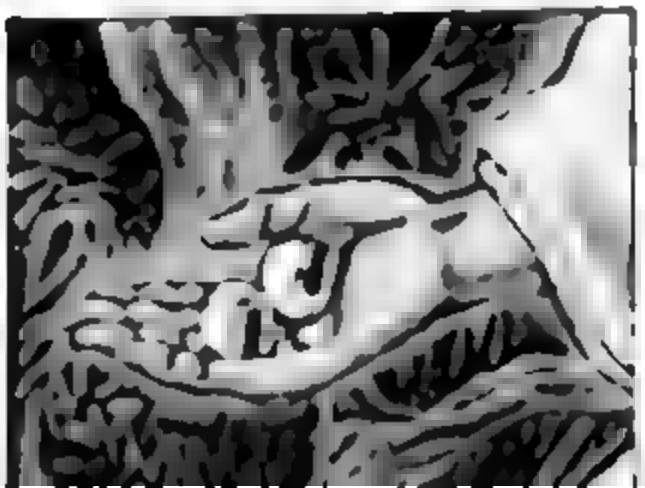
I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOME-THING.

THE POSITION OF THE SIGHTED AND THE MEMBERS OF THE [illegible] IS BE REVERSED

IN A WORLD WITHOUT LIGHT

THEY'RE HERE


SHE COULD SENSE THE PRESENCE OF LIVING CREATURES.



TO IKU, UNABLE TO SEE CLEARLY IN THE DARK-NESS,

THEY WERE ORDI-NARY TANUKI,*

HOW-EVER,

*Raccoon-dogs

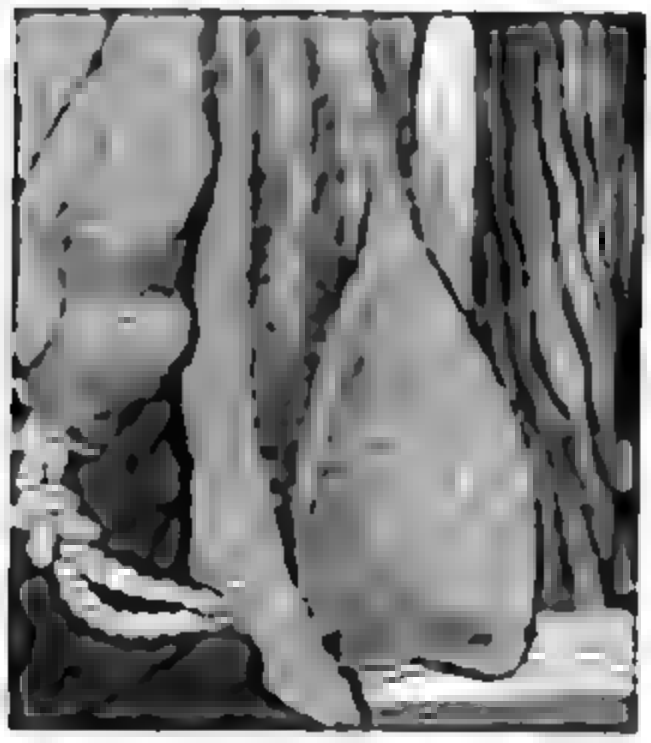
IN HER EYES, SHE SAW,

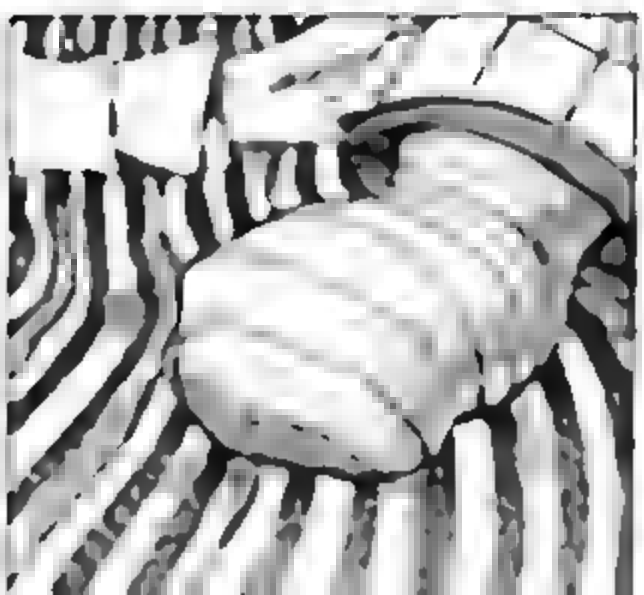
A GOLDEN SEROW *

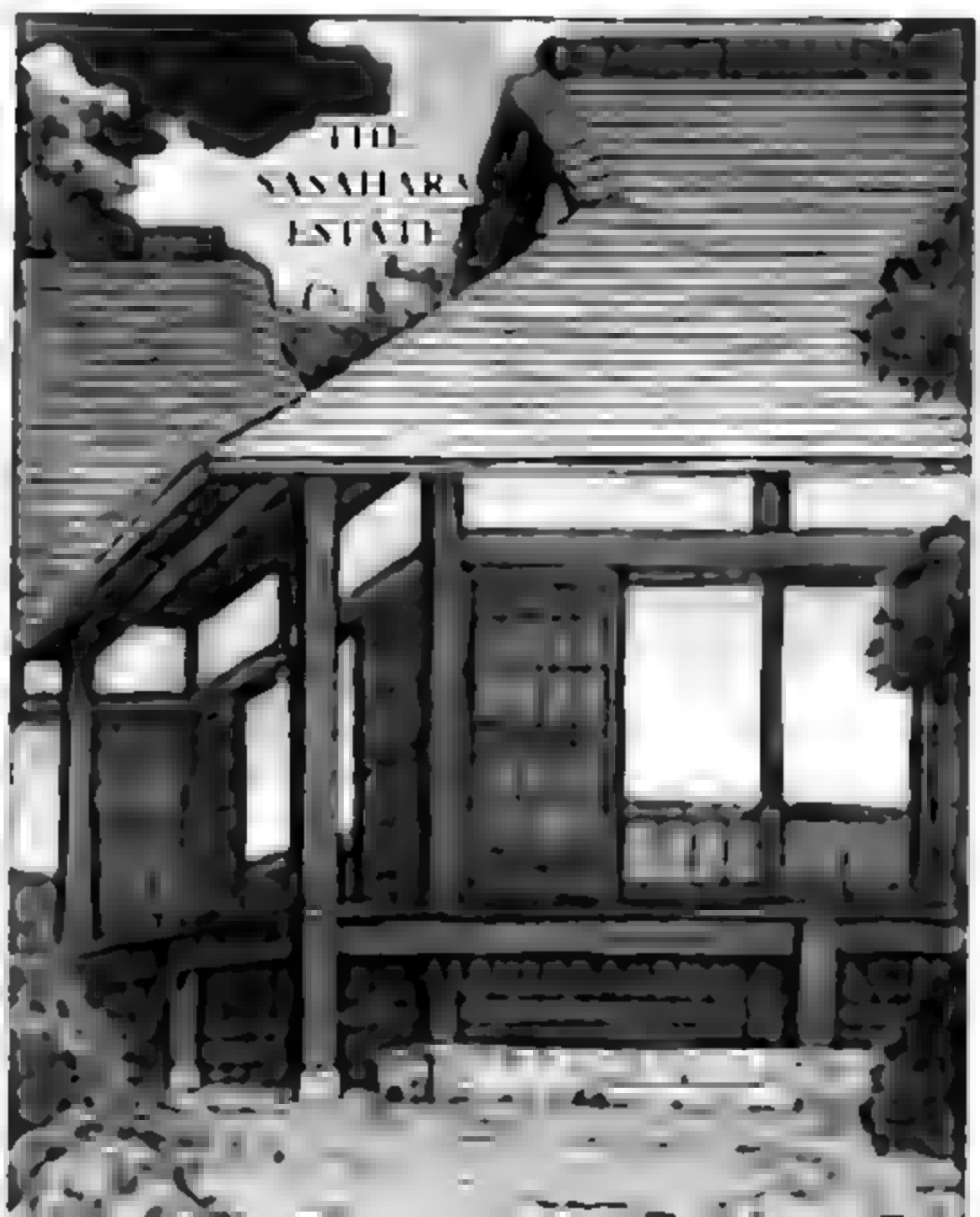
*Kamoshika, a kind of wild goat or antelope.

SEIGEN !

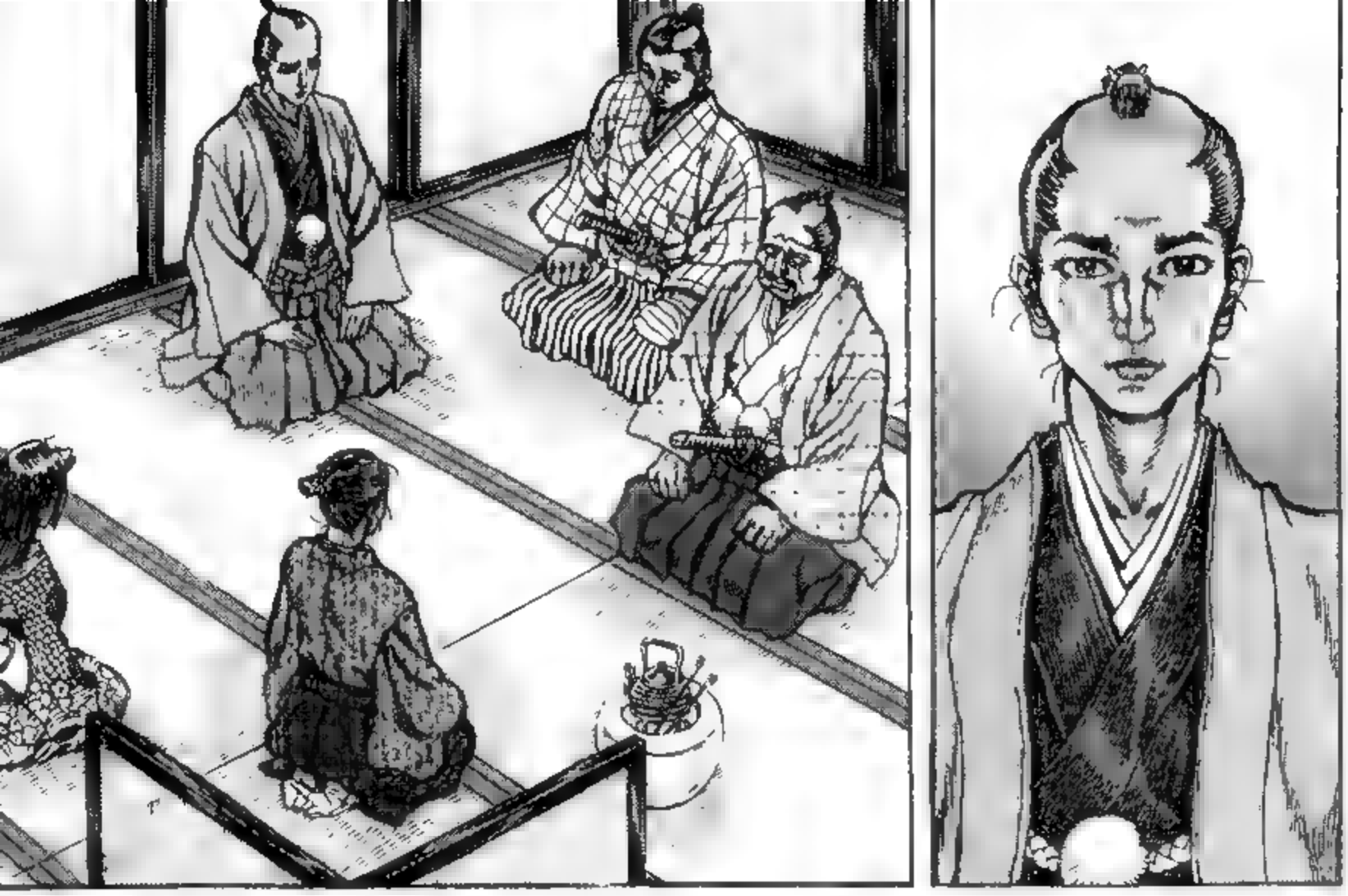
BECAUSE HE WOULD AGAIN FIGHT THE "TIGER AMONG TIGERS."

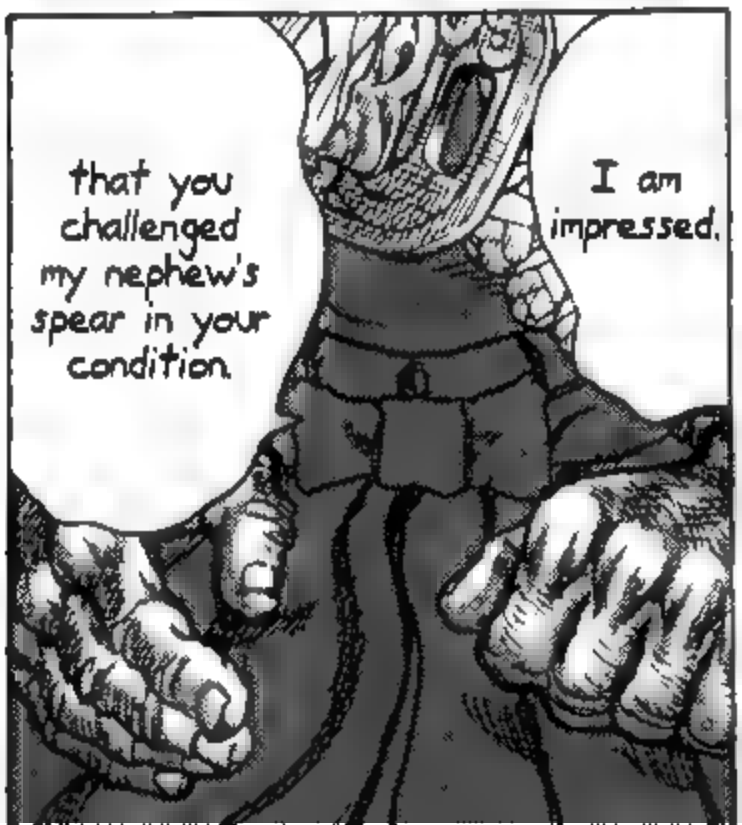





THE
SASAHARA
ESTATE

INOMATA
SHINSO'S
UNCLE,




that you challenged my nephew's spear in your condition.
I am impressed.

We bear no grudge against you for the incident involving my nephew Shingo.

I'm offering you a position.

I want you to train him in your one-armed fencing technique.

Since he lost the fingers on his right hand, Shingo can no longer wield a spear.

It must be difficult to live as a ronin.

If you come to my estate, you will not lack for a stipend.

I have Sasahara-sensei's permission.

I REFUSE.

SWORDFIGHTING IS SWORDFIGHTING.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A "ONE-ARMED TECHNIQUE."

SKILL WITH THE SWORD DOES NOT COME FROM THE ARM.

T-Takuro-sama done

Y-you

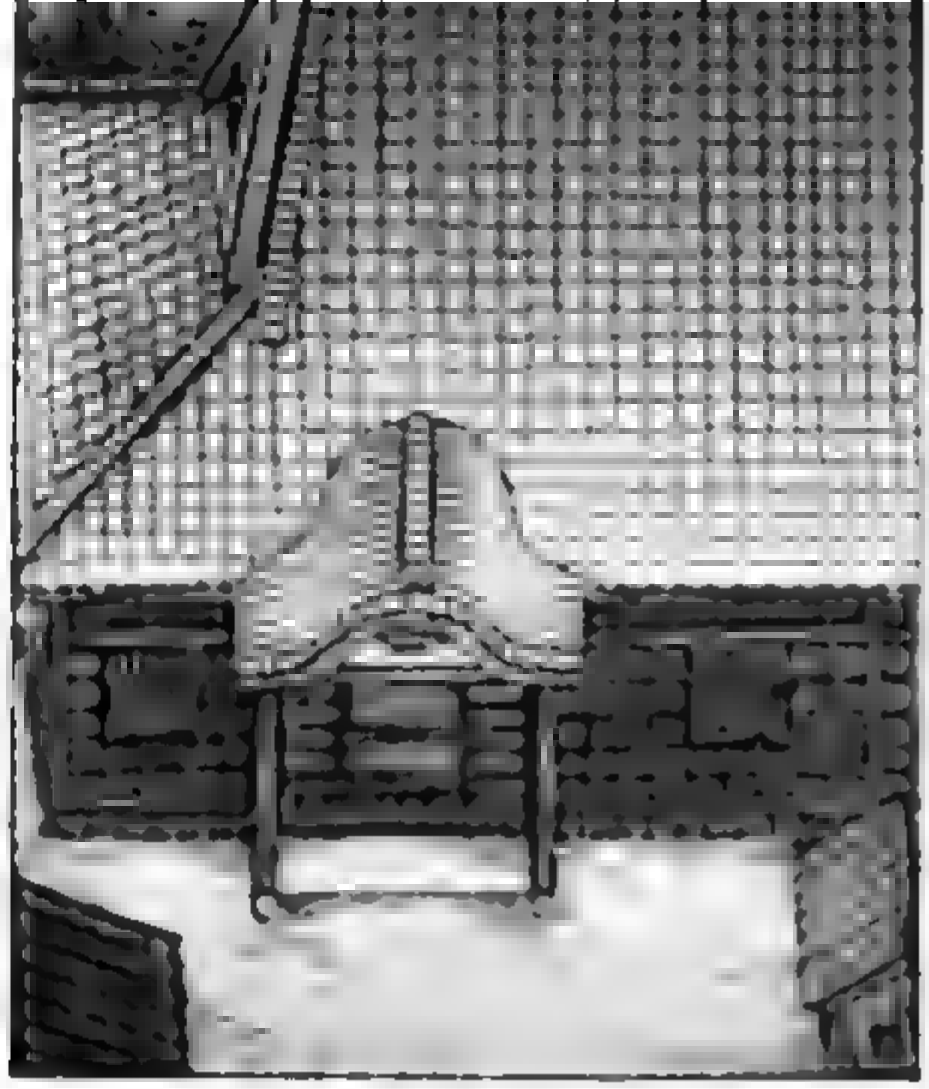
I sincerely apologize for his ill-mannered words

I'm afraid Fujiki-dono's thoughts are preoccupied with the coming tournament

SHINGO! WE'RE LEAVING!

Fujiki
Genosuke-
dono

SHOW
ME YOUR
TECHNIQUE.

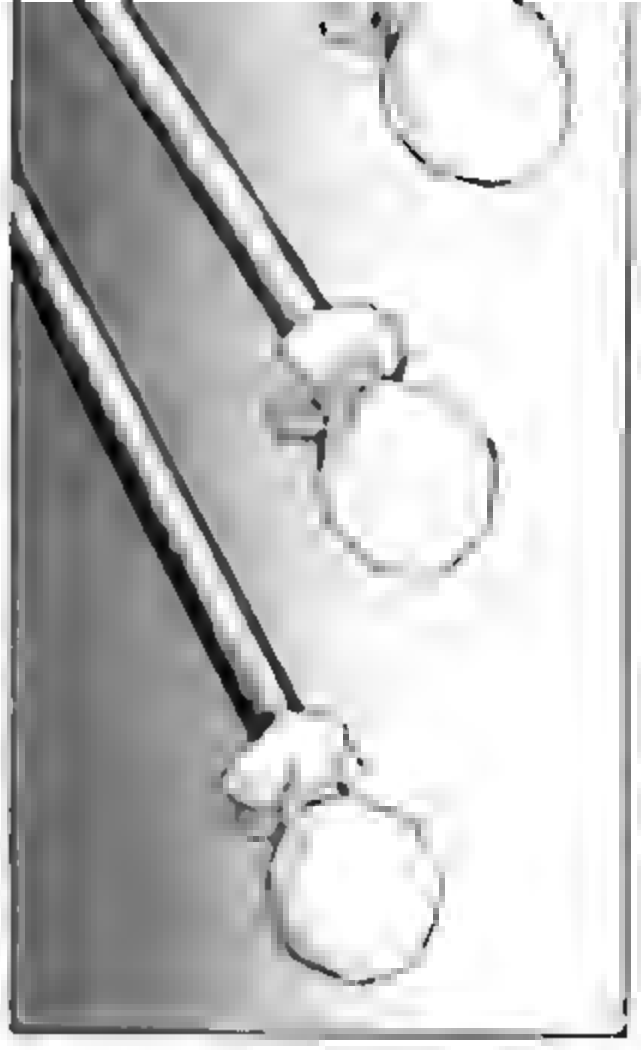


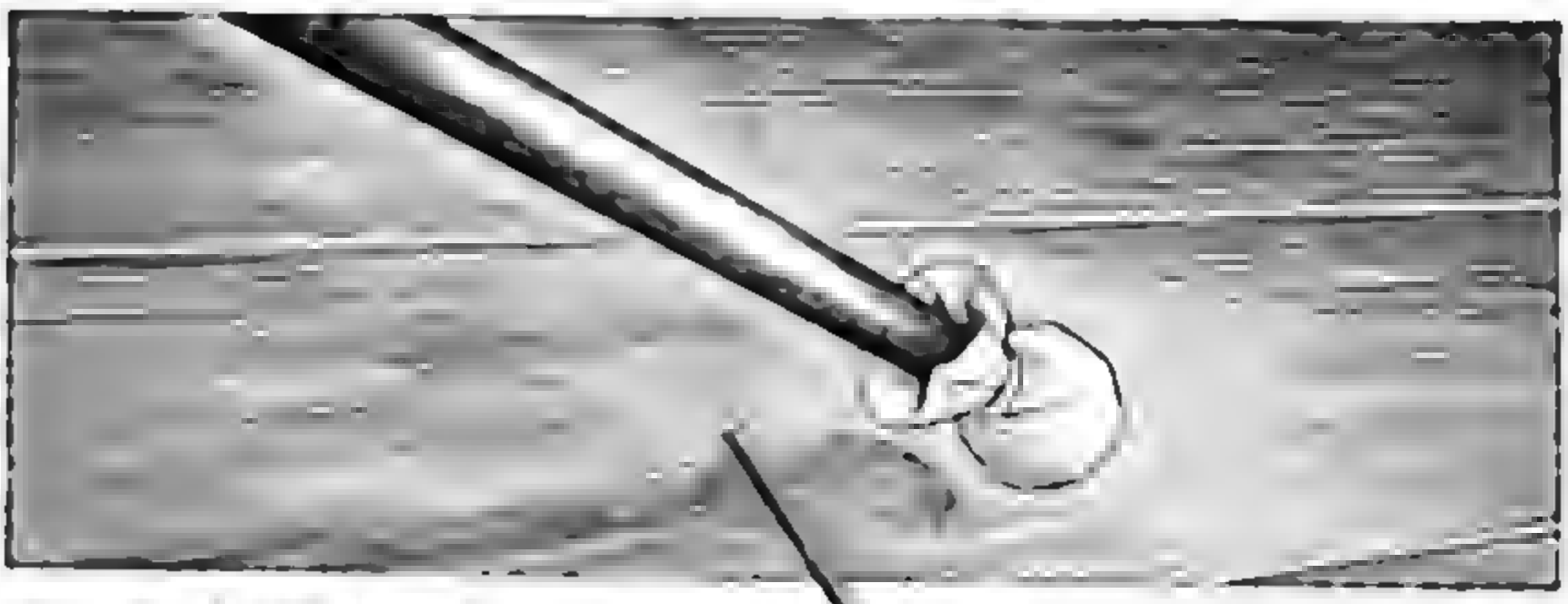
SASA-
HARA
SHULZA-
BuROU,

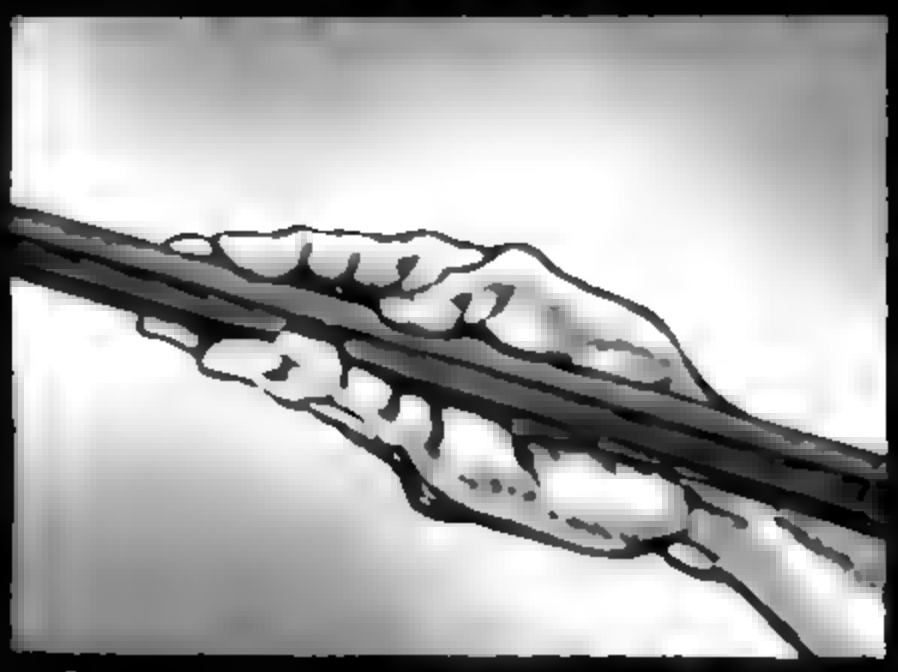
OF THE
KAMAHOU-
ZOUIN-RYUU
SCHOOL,

INSTRUC-
TOR OF
SPEAR-
MANSHIP
FOR THE
TOKUGAWA
CLAN,

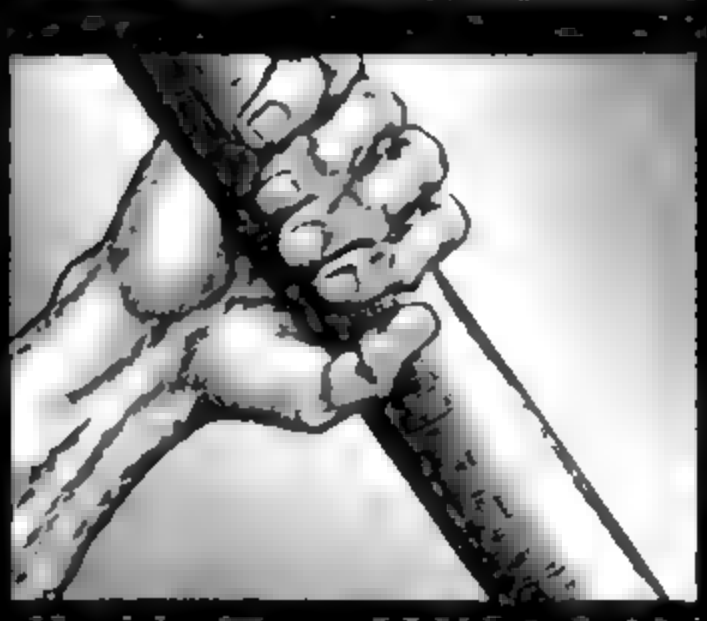
COULD
EASILY
CLAIM TO
BE THE
GREATEST
MASTER OF
THE SPEAR
IN ALL THE
REALM

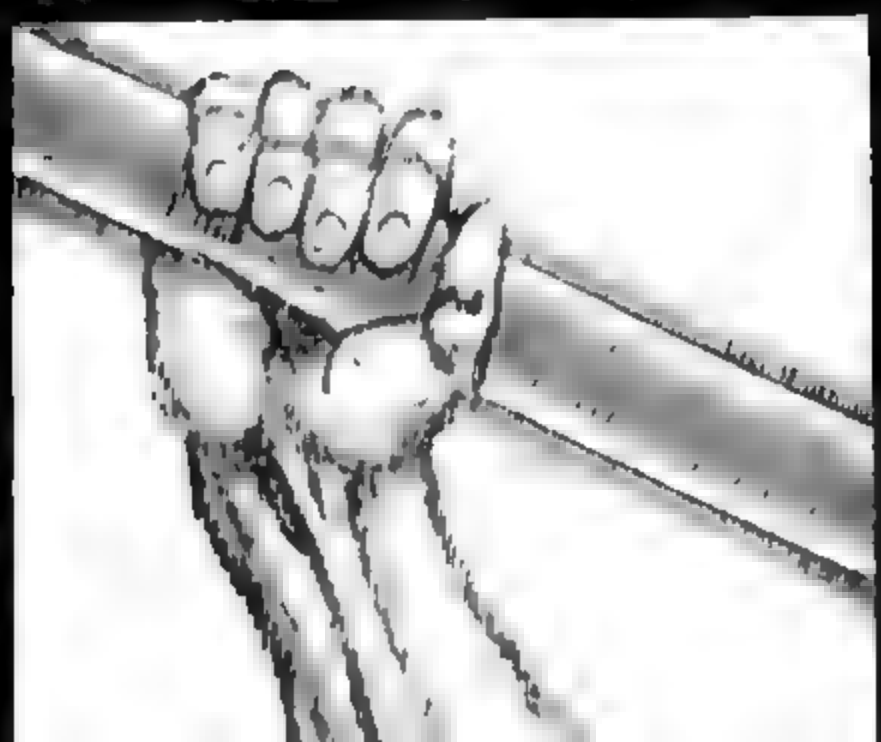


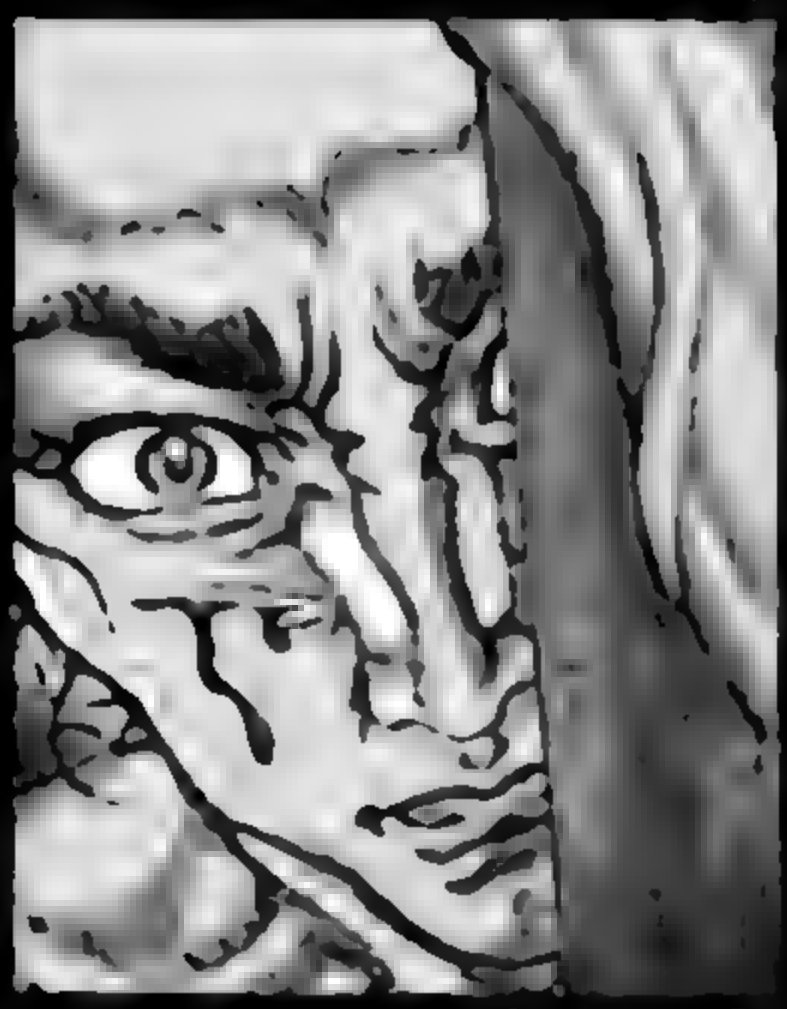




SHUU-
ZABUROU
HAD SEEN
SEIGEN'S
TECH-
NIQUE
AT
SUNPU
CASTLE

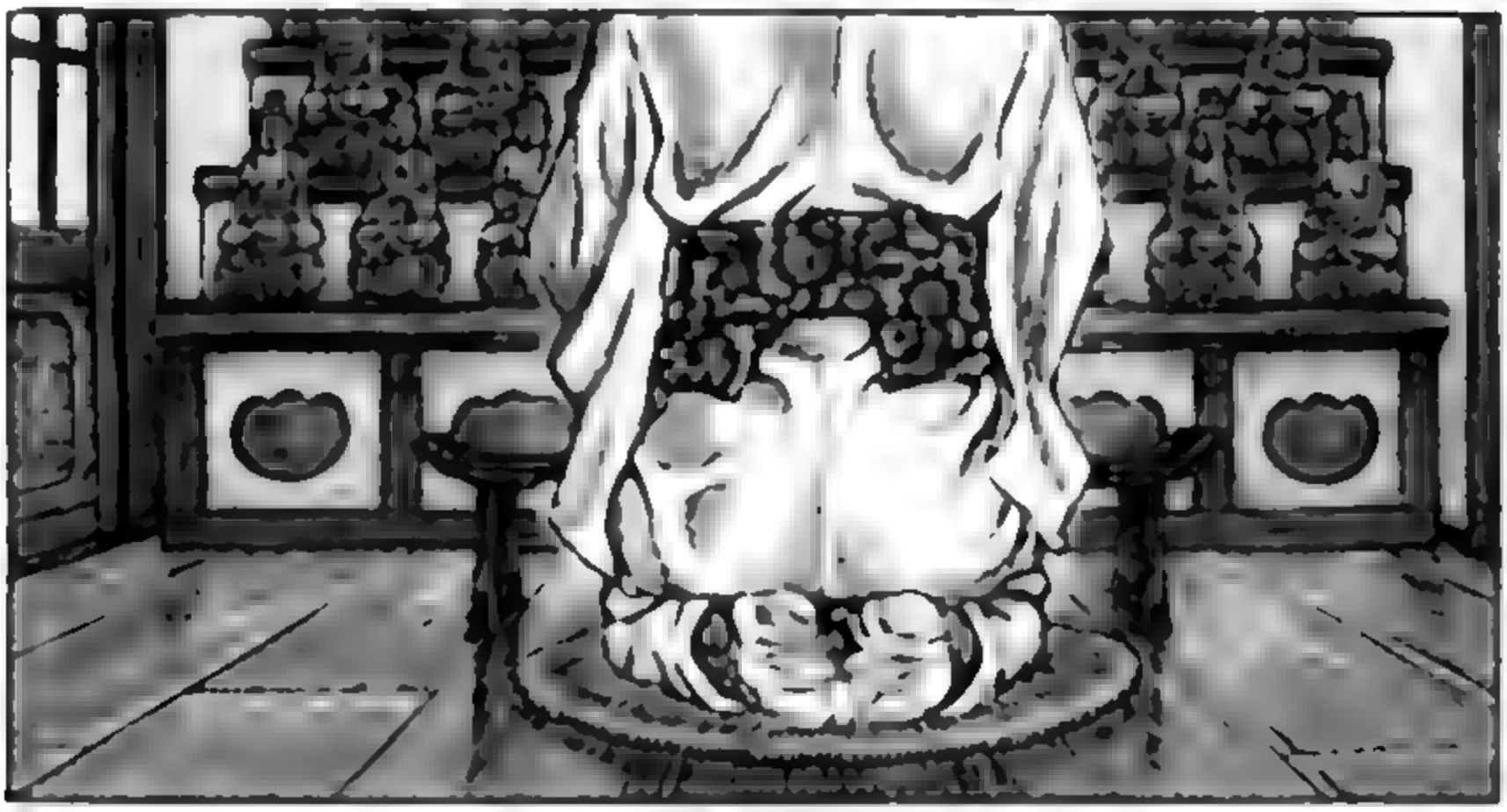


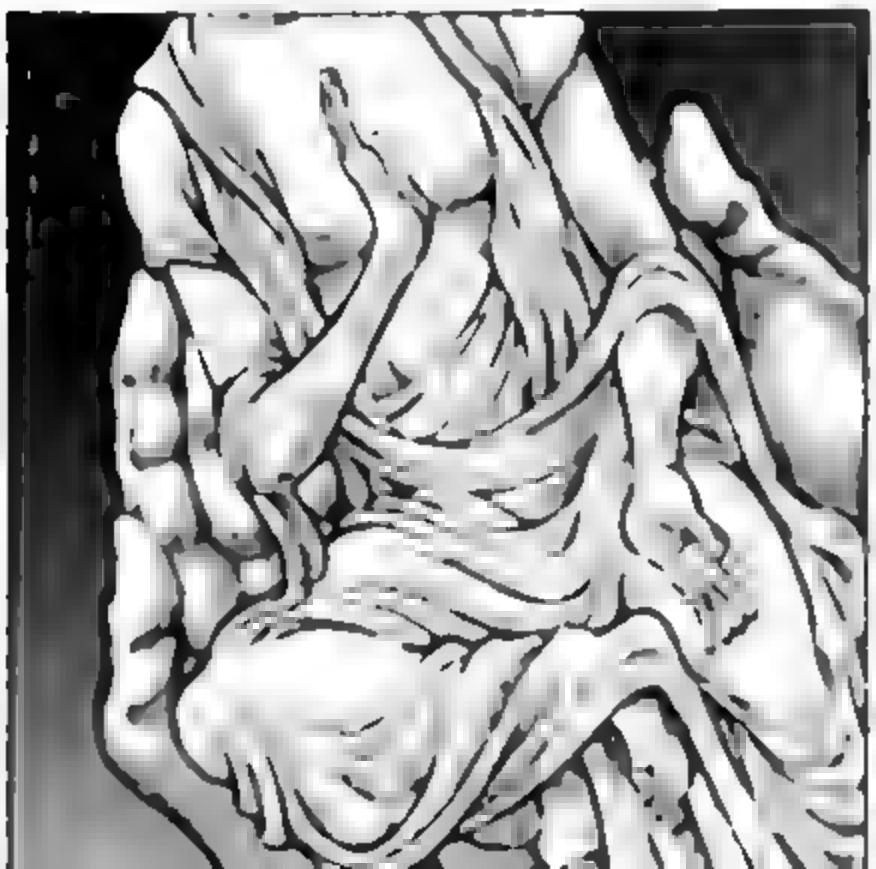


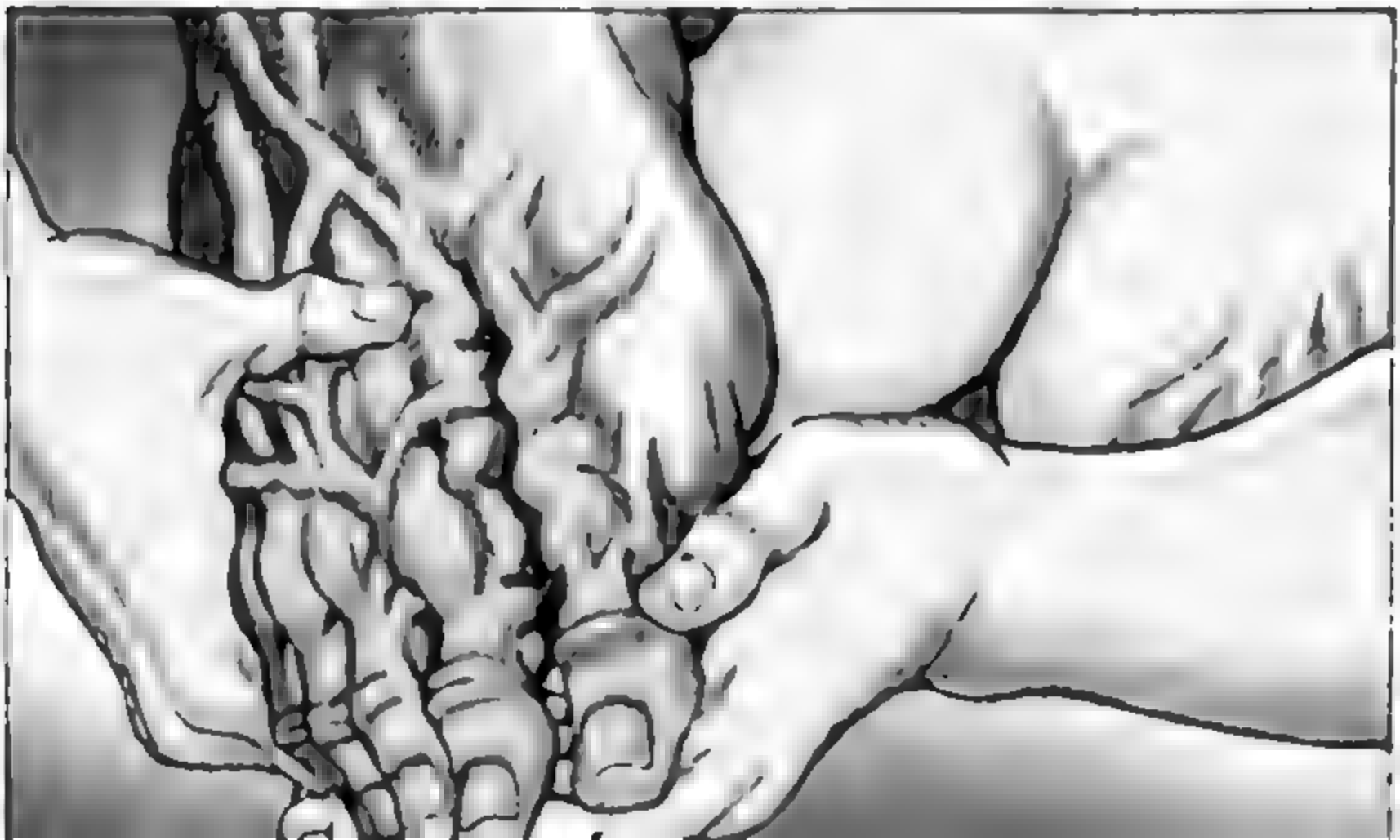


TAKE MIE-DONO AND LEAVE SUNPU AT ONCE!

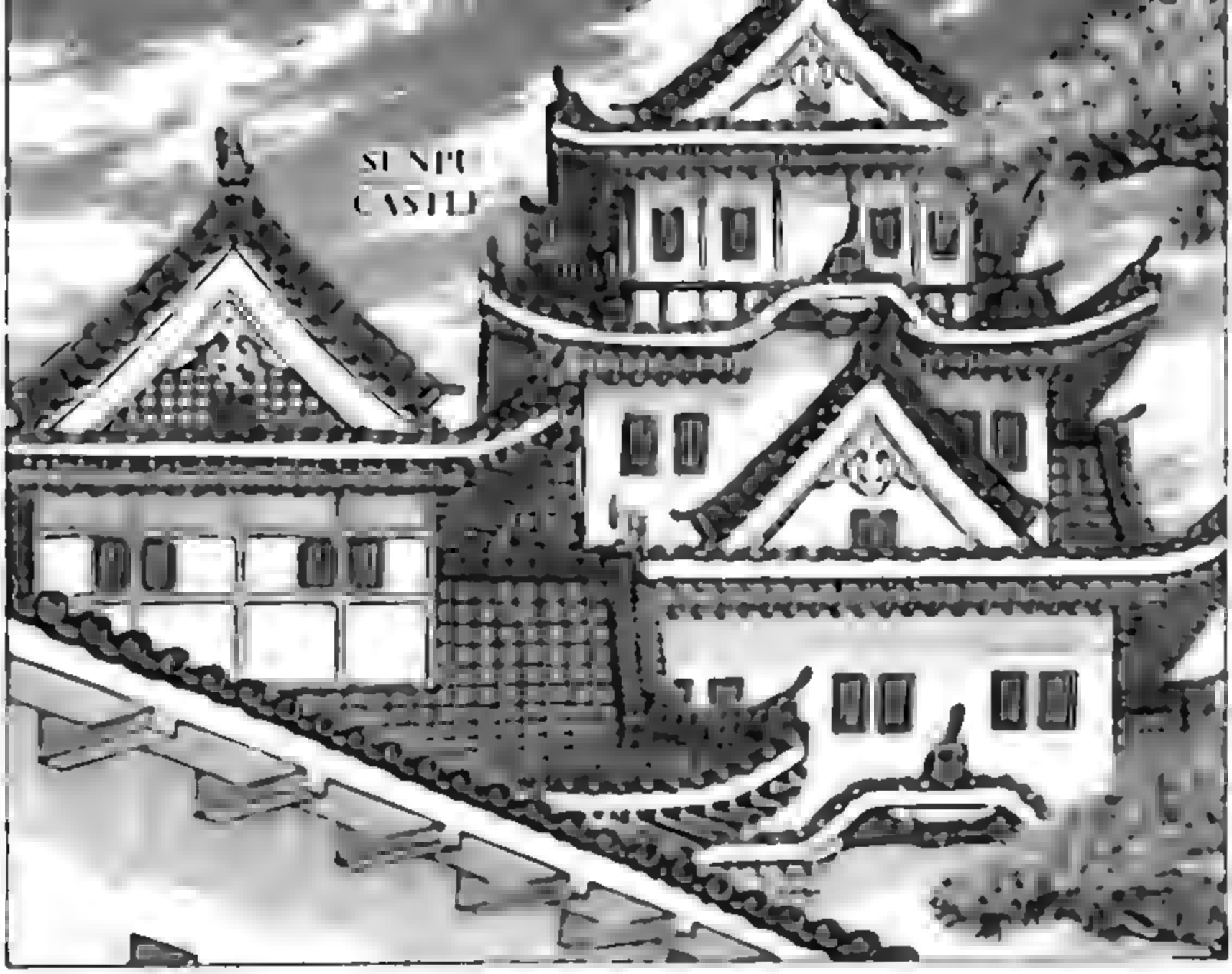
YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR SEIGEN'S SWORD!







CHAPTER 70
CHANGING
CLOTHES


SUNPU
CASTLE

SASA-HARA-DONO.

THE MAN WHO CALLED OUT TO SHUUZA-BUROU,

WAS THE MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUC-TOR FOR SURUGA DOMAIN, HYUUGA HANBEE MASAHISA.

YES. INDEED

RATHER CHILLY FOR SPRING, ISN'T IT?

I'VE GOTTEN USED TO IT.

I HEAR YOU HAVE MORE THAN TWENTY ROOMS STAFFING ON YOUR ESTATE.

IT MUST BE CROWDED.

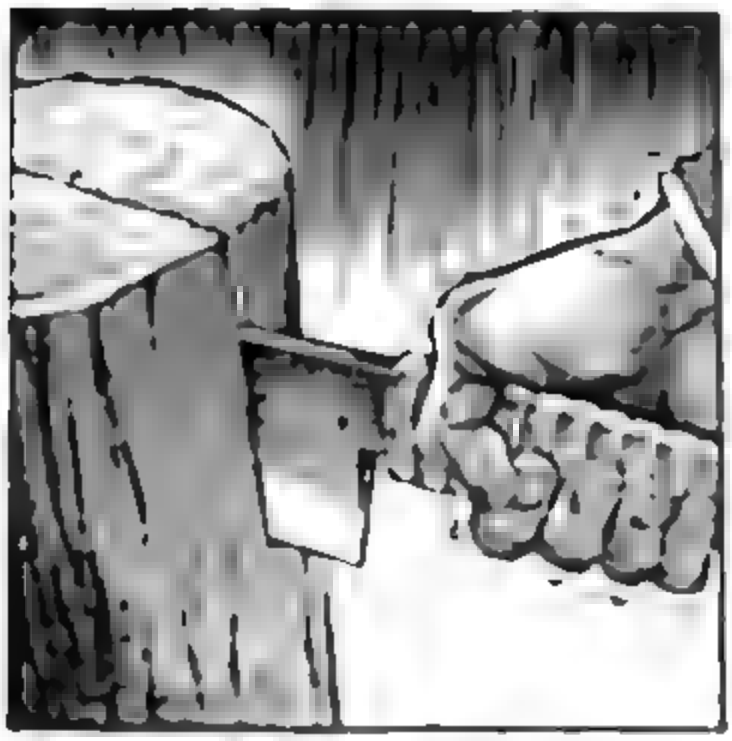
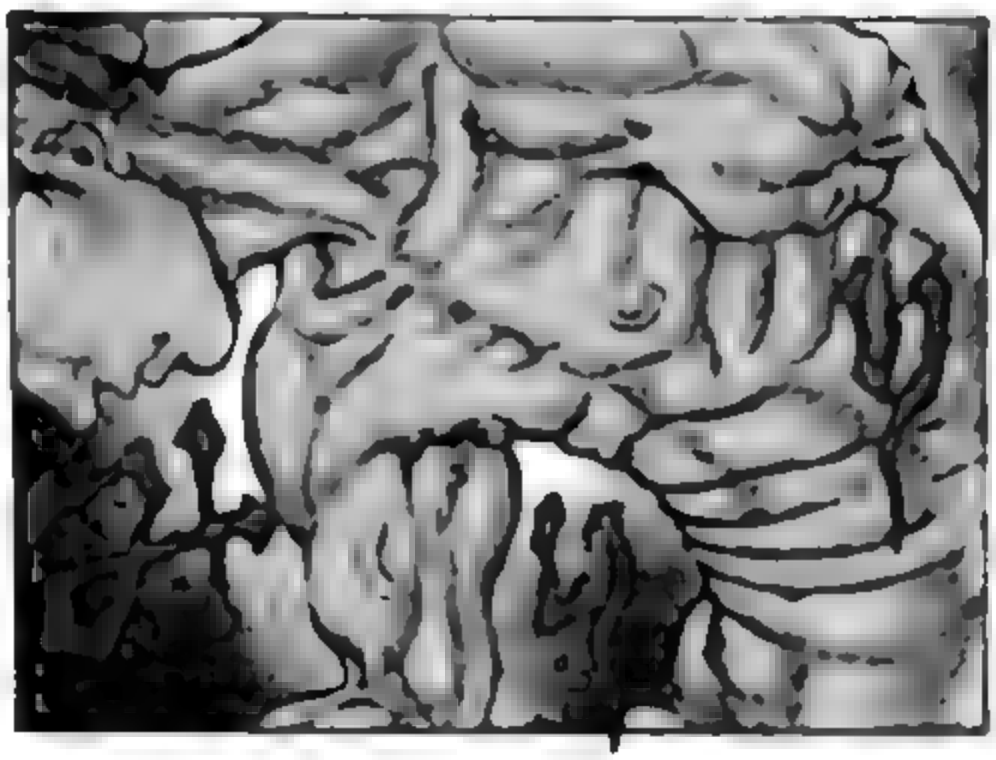
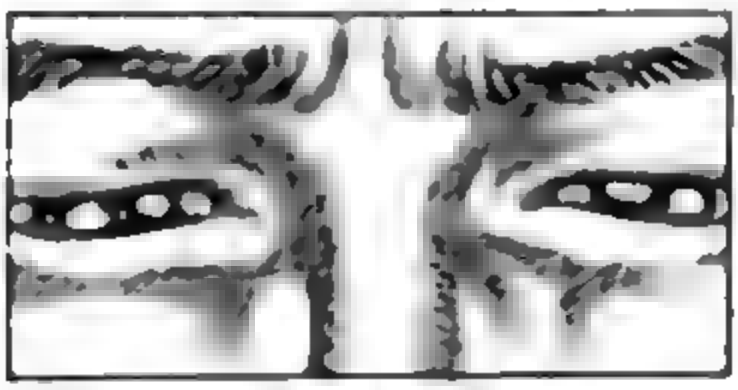
BLUSHED RED IN EMBARRASSMENT.

SHUUZABUROU'S FACE.

OF COURSE IF ONE OF THEM WINS, A PART OF THE HONOR WILL GO TO YOU.

YOU SHOULD REFRAIN FROM TRAINING LOWLY SAMURAI.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN TO WHOM YOUR SPEAR BELONGS?

To spit firewood just by pressing down with the hatchet

I wouldn't want to go up against your tribesmen*

*A technique of cracking wood at the base and pushing

THE MAN EX-CLAIMING IN ADMIRATION WAS JOJA NEMON

HE WAS BORN STAYING ON THE SASAHARA STATE

IN PREP-
ARATION
FOR THE
SEASONAL
CHANGE OF
CLOTHES
IN APRIL,

THE
WOMAN
HELPING
MIE TO
STRETCH
THE
CLOTHES
OUT TO
DRY,

WAS
NIEMON'S
WIFE,
KAYA.

WHEN ARE YOU DUE?

WHEN THE CICADAS SING.

I HOPE MY HUSBAND RECEIVES A COMMISSION BEFORE THEN, BUT...

I'M GOING FISHING FOR CARP WITH FUJIKI-DONO.

DON'T WORRY, KAYA!

I HAVE A CERTIFICATE FROM SASAHARA-SAMA.

CARP AND MISO SOUP WILL HELP YOU TO MAKE LOTS OF MILK!

WHEN MIE LAUGHED,

GENNO-SUKE'S CHEEKS TREMBLED JUST A BIT.

IT'S A LITTLE EARLY FOR THAT!

SONE MASATOMO'S RESIDENCE IN HIGASHIMARU

SONE MASATOMO WAS THE FAMOUS SAMURAI WHO CHOPPED OFF HIS RIGHT HAND MAN

AS PART OF NEGOTIATIONS HE WAS MARRIED TO [illegible]'S DAUGHTER

HE MEANT A SPY

BY "SUSPECT,"

SHUUZABUROU.

HAVE YOU LOCATED THE "SUSPECT?"

TO FIND OUT THE STATE OF AFFAIRS AMONG THE DAIMYO

THAT IS, A SPY ORDERED BY THE SHOGUN OR HIS ADVISORS.

I SWEAR BY THE SASAHARA NAME.

THE SUSPECT IS NOT AMONG THEM.

ALL OF THEM ARE OF NOBLE CHARACTER FROM EXCELLENT MILITARY FAMILIES.

AT PRESENT, TWENTY-TWO RONIN ARE IN MY CARE.

SHUUZA-BUROU.

Our lord has ordered me to discover the spy

THE SHOGUN HAD CERTAINLY SENT A SPY, ASSERTED THE SPOILED CHILD TADANAGA

EDO.

MUST BE AFRAID THAT SURUGA WAS PLOTTING INSURRECTION

SHOW ME THE LIST OF RONIN.

FOR THAT REASON IF SAMURAI DID NOT DISCOVER THE SPY

HE WOULD SURELY FALL VICTIM TO THE ATTACK RYUNOSUKE STYLE

EH?

MAKE THIS MAN THE SPY.

BOUT THAT, OUTTA-EDOU

TO WHOM DOES YOUR SPEAR BELONG?

SHUJA-BURU

IT BELONGS TO OUR LORD

Who decides to perce an opponent?

Or lord?

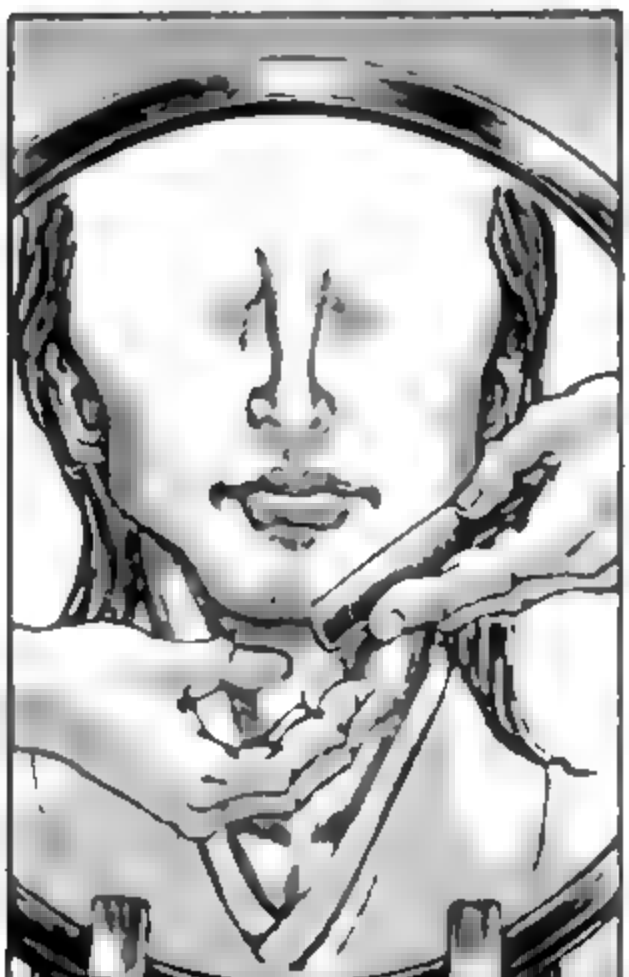
Or the spear?

THE SPEAR HAS NO MIND OF ITS OWN

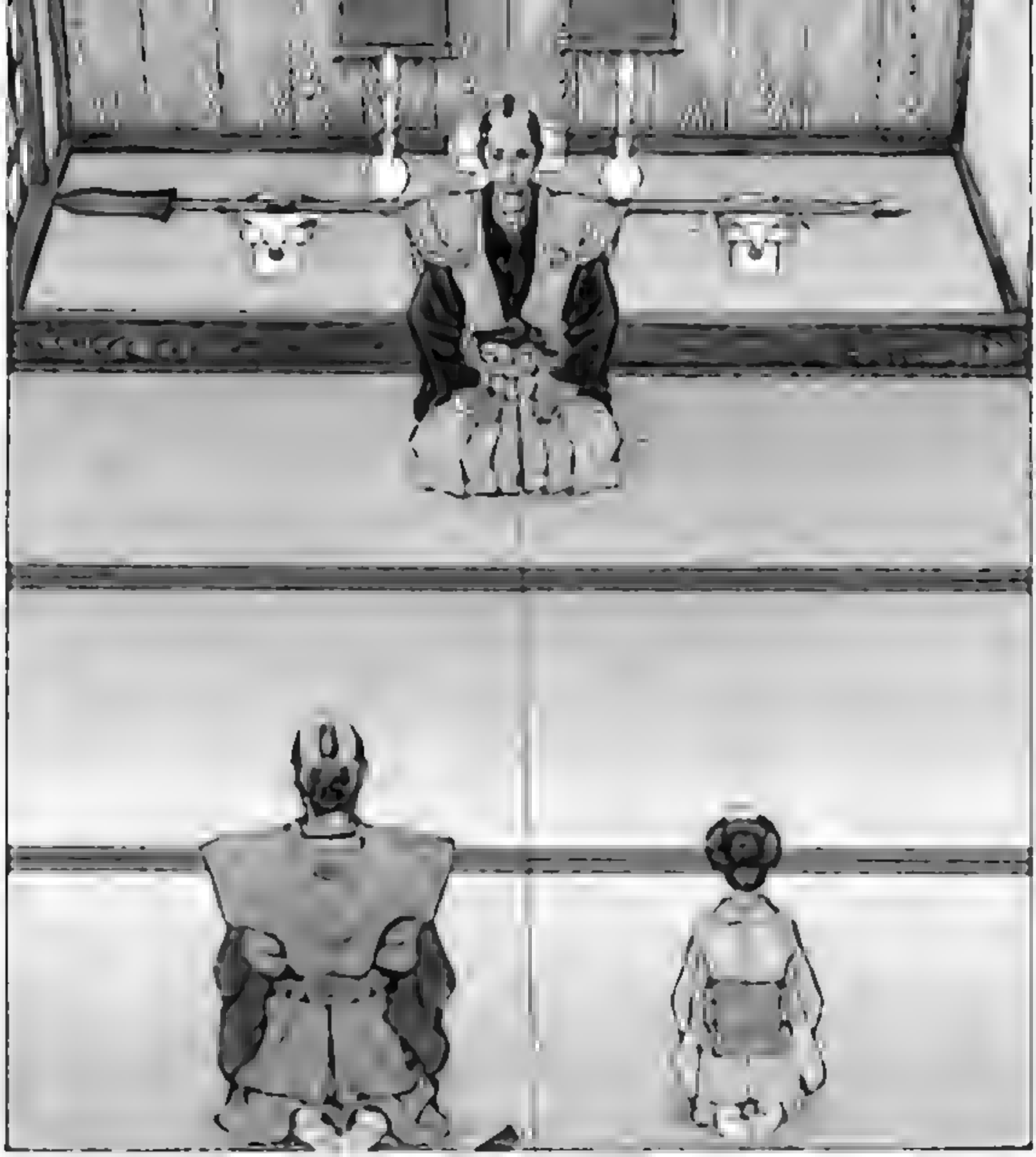
THE SPEAR IS JUST A TOOL.

I will obey the wishes of the Suruga Daimyo, Lord Tadamoto

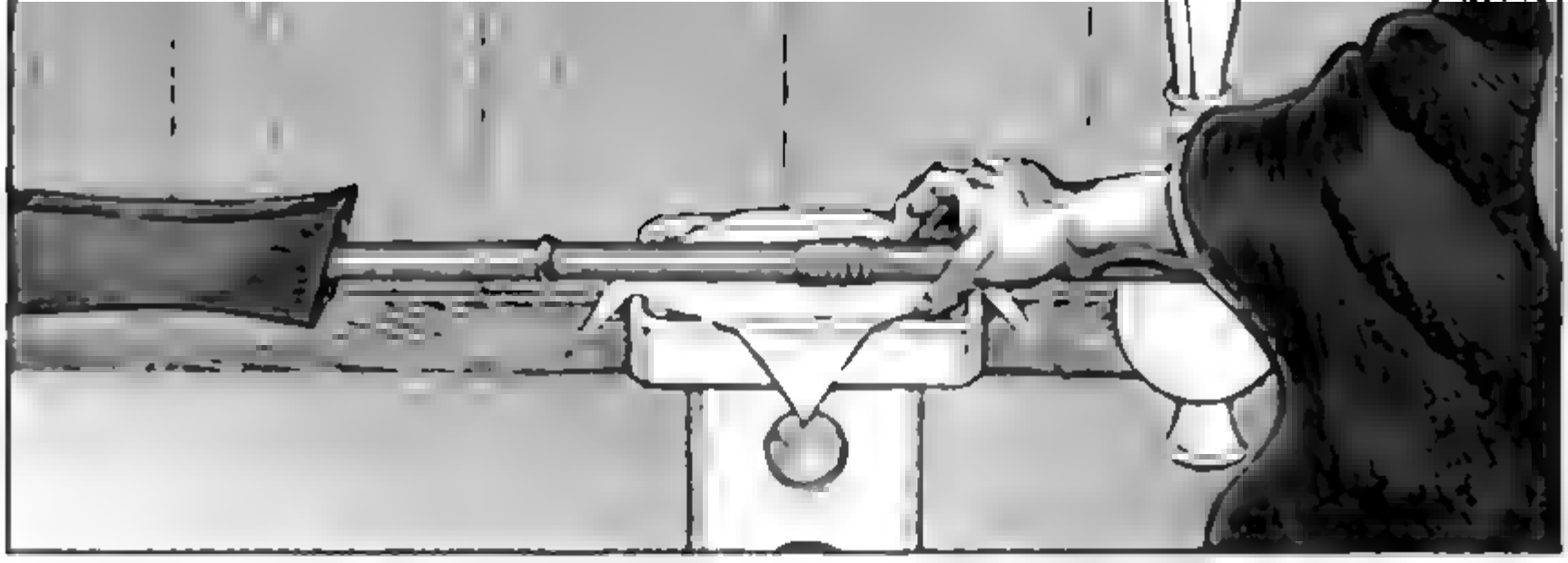
I shall fulfill my duty.

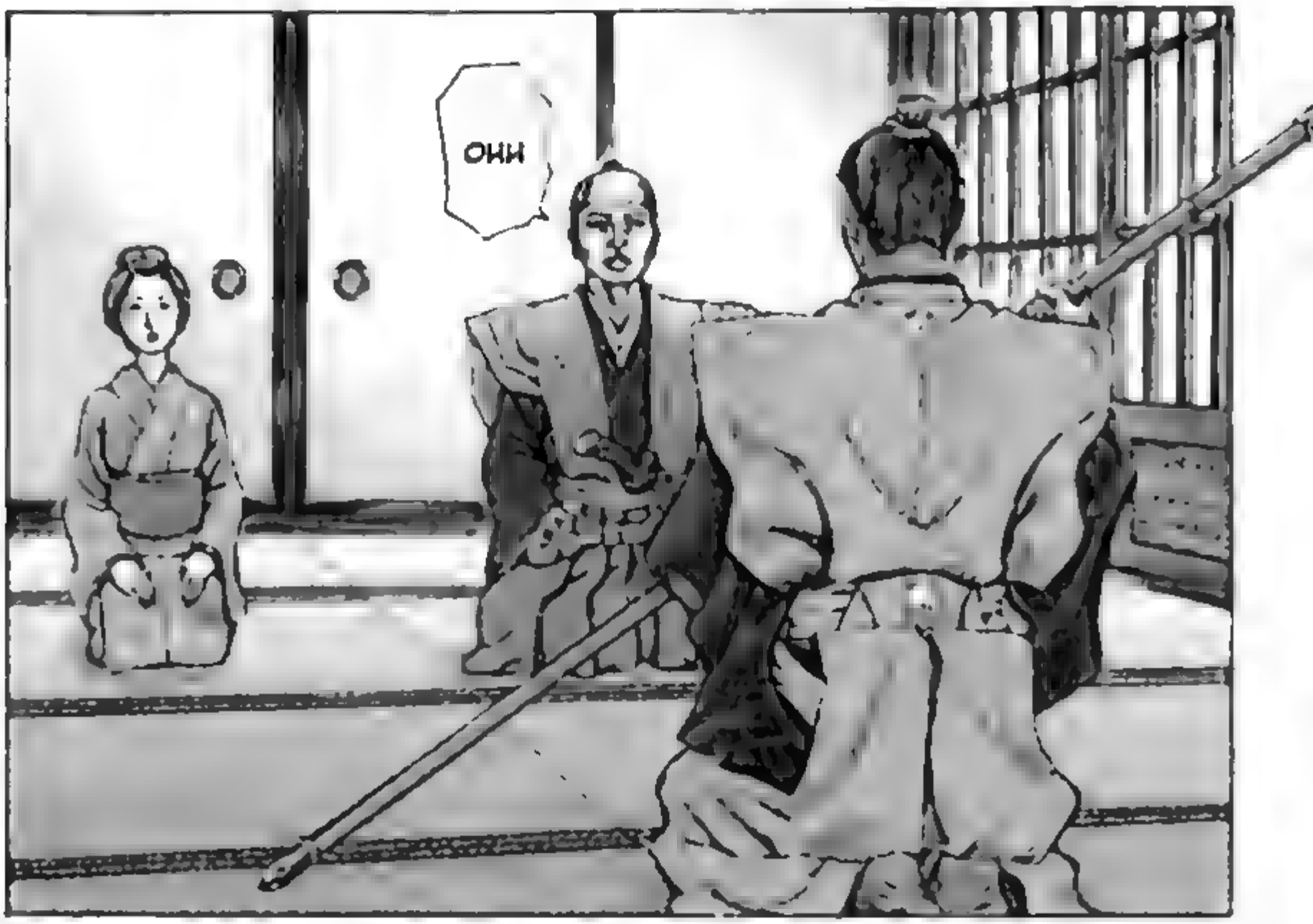


SASAHARA-SAMA HAS RECOMMENDED ME TO THE TOKUGAWA CLAN.
I MUST THANK HIM.



URITA-DONO, THERE IS SOMETHING I WANT TO SHOW YOU.




ОНИ

THAT IS WHAT IT IS CALLED.

IS THAT THE "TONGUE-CUTTING SPEAR?"

DO YOU REALLY THINK I COULD PIERCE,

A TARGET THAT SMALL WITH THE TIP OF A SPEAR?

BUT THE TONGUE OF A GIANT SNAKE IS NOT EVEN AS LARGE AS MY LITTLE FINGER.

IF HE SAID NO, IT WOULD BE RUDE.

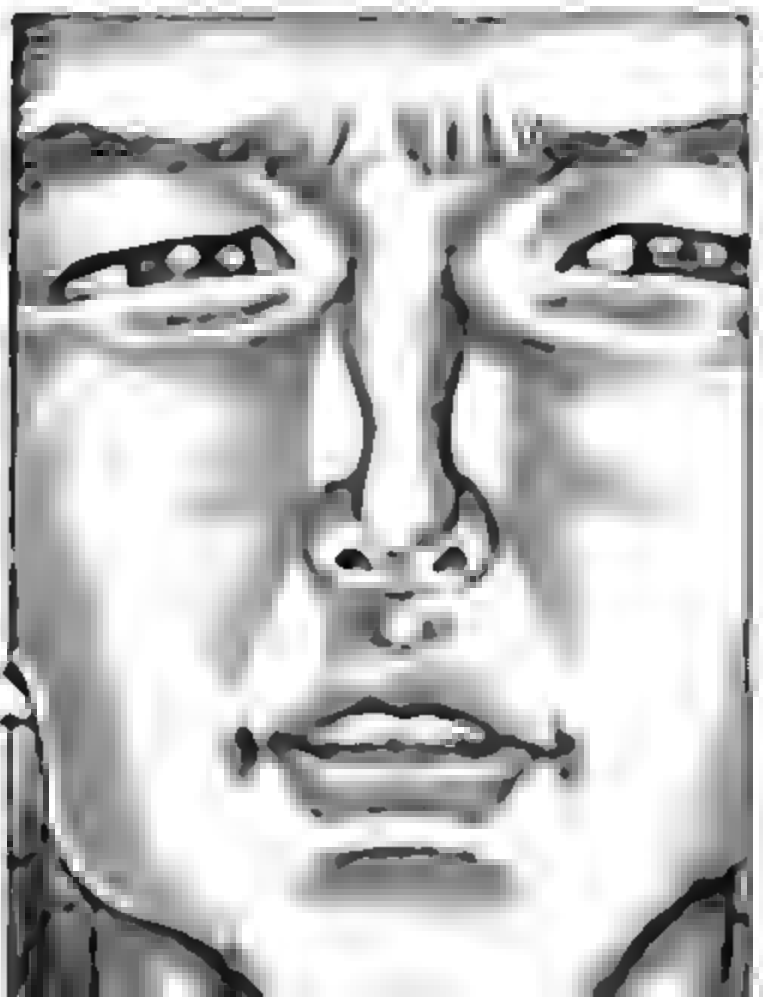
IF HE SAID YES, IT WOULD SEEM LIKE FLATTERY

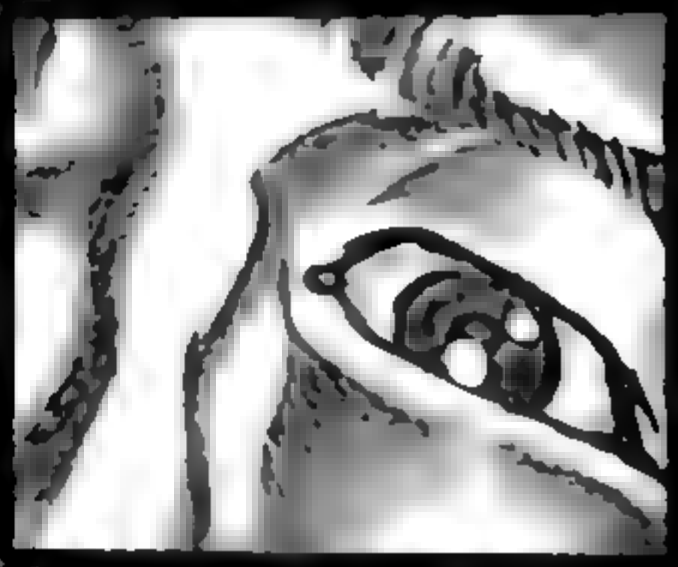
NIEMON WAS AT A LOSS TO REPLY

YES.

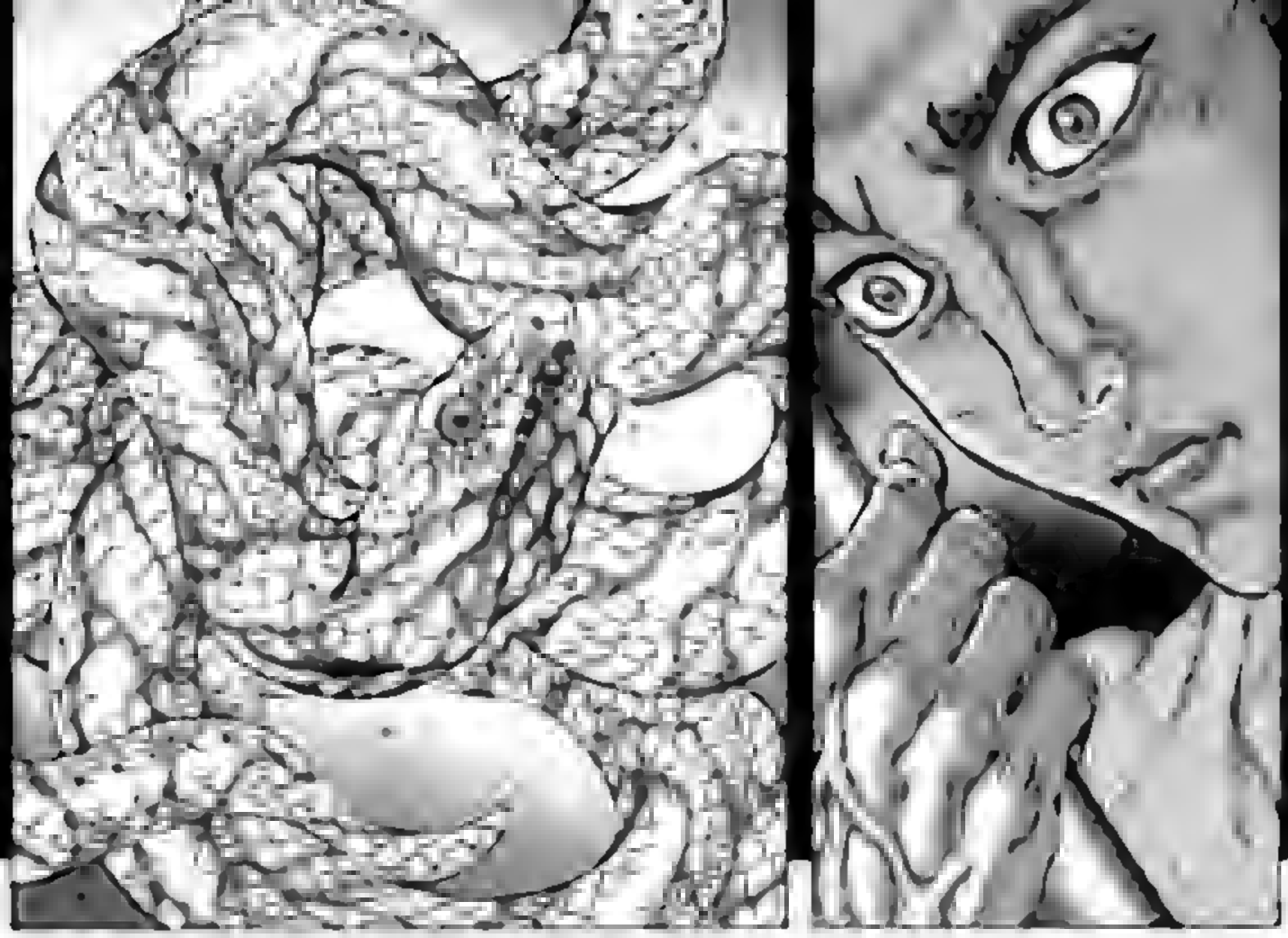
IT IS AN EXQUISITE TOOL TO FULFILL YOUR DUTY.

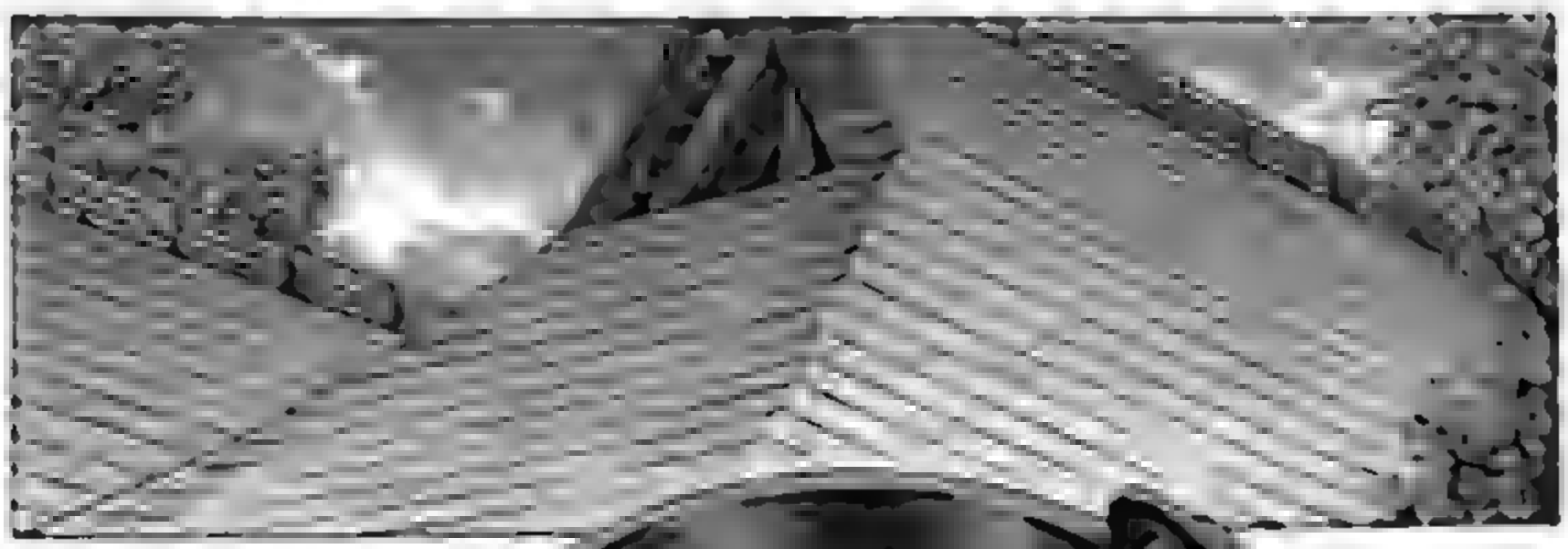
SASAHARA-DONO, YOUR SPEAR IS BEYOND COMPARE.





EXPERTLY PIERCED THREE HEARTS



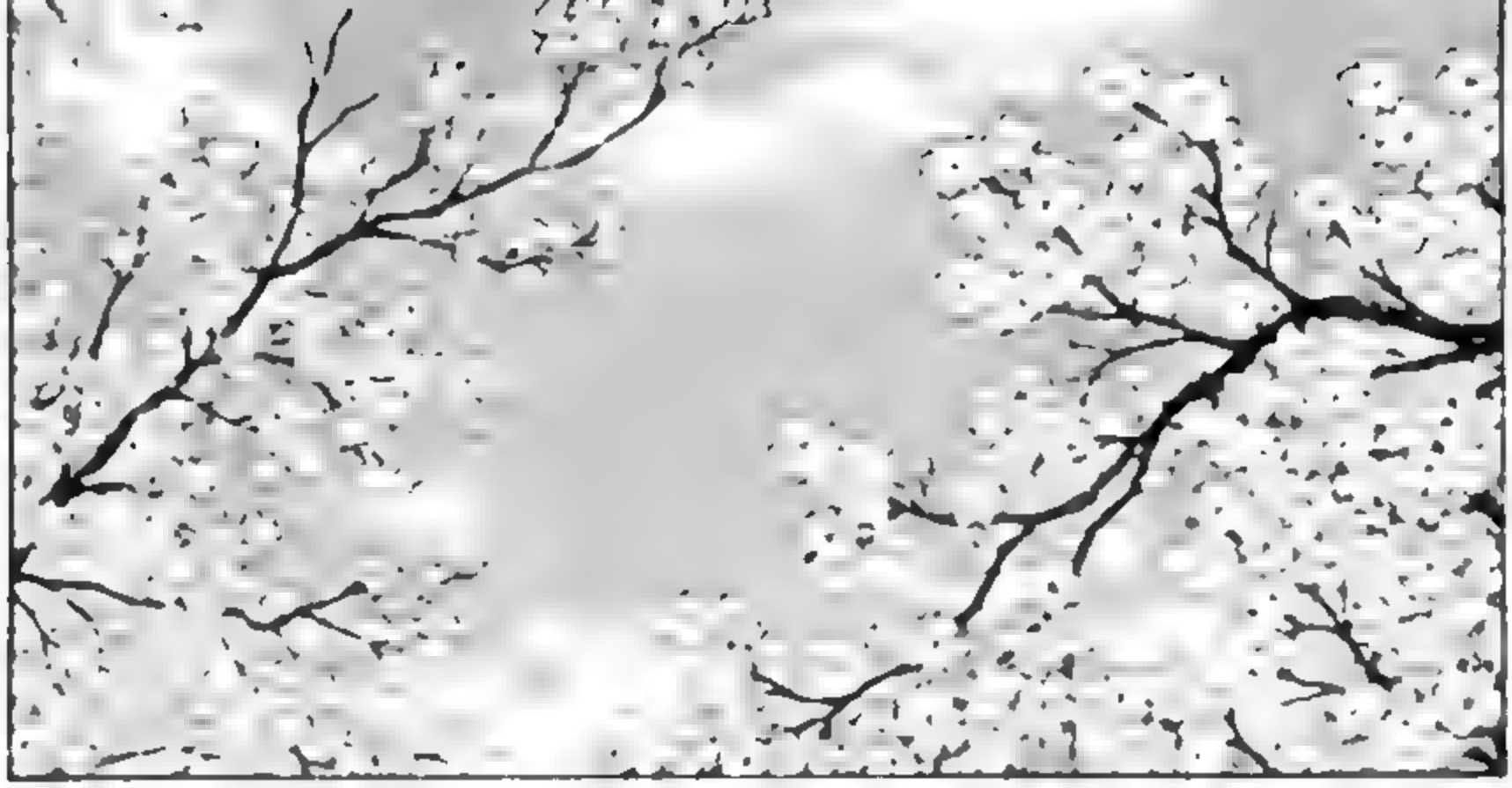


IT SEEMS THAT URITA-SAMA HAS RECEIVED A COMMISSION.

FUJIKI-SAMA

I AM GLAD.

CHAPTER 71
TIGER
KILLING



WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

AT THE SASAHARA ESTATE,

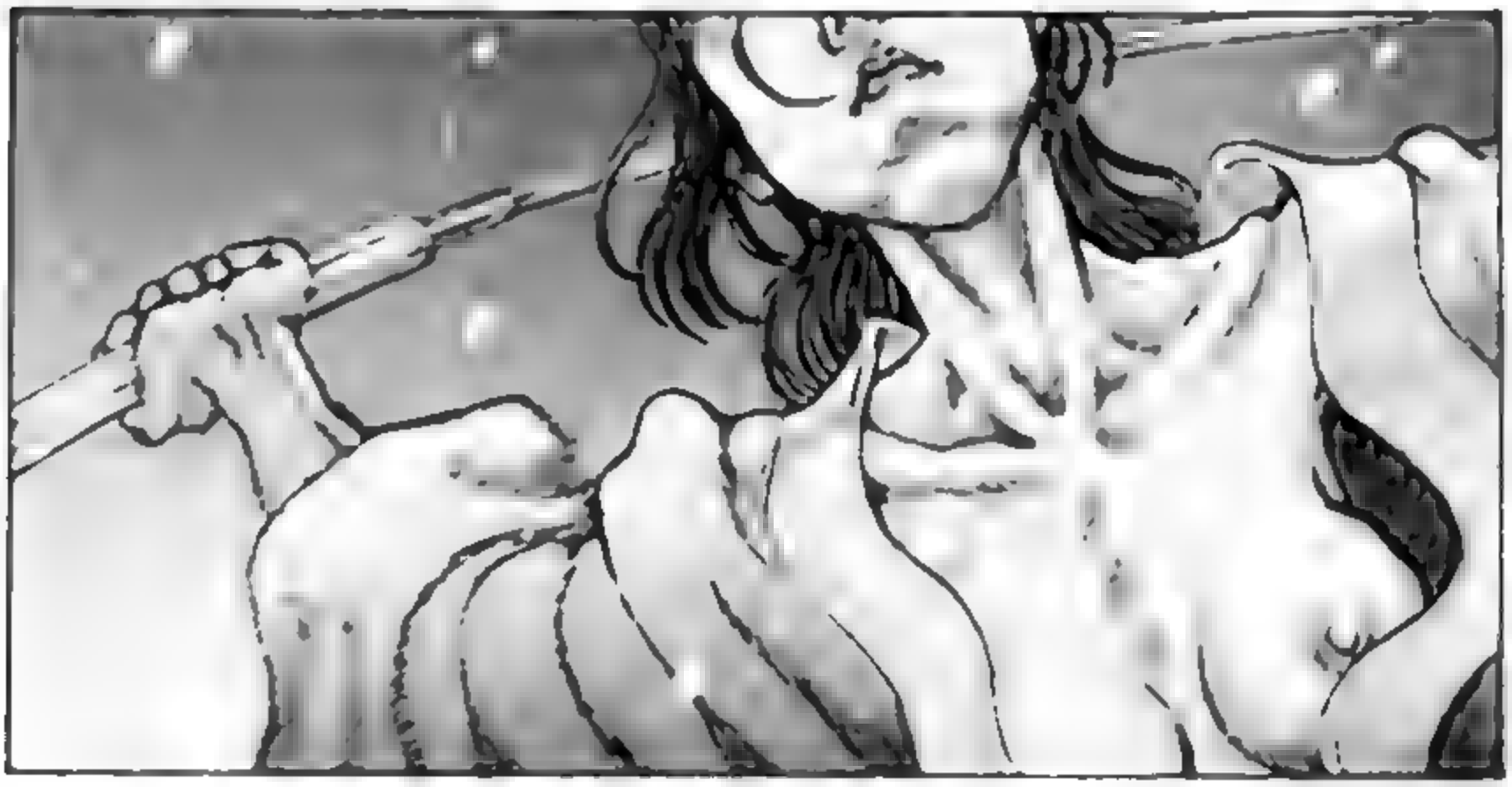
AROUND THE TIME OF THE SPRING EQUINOX,

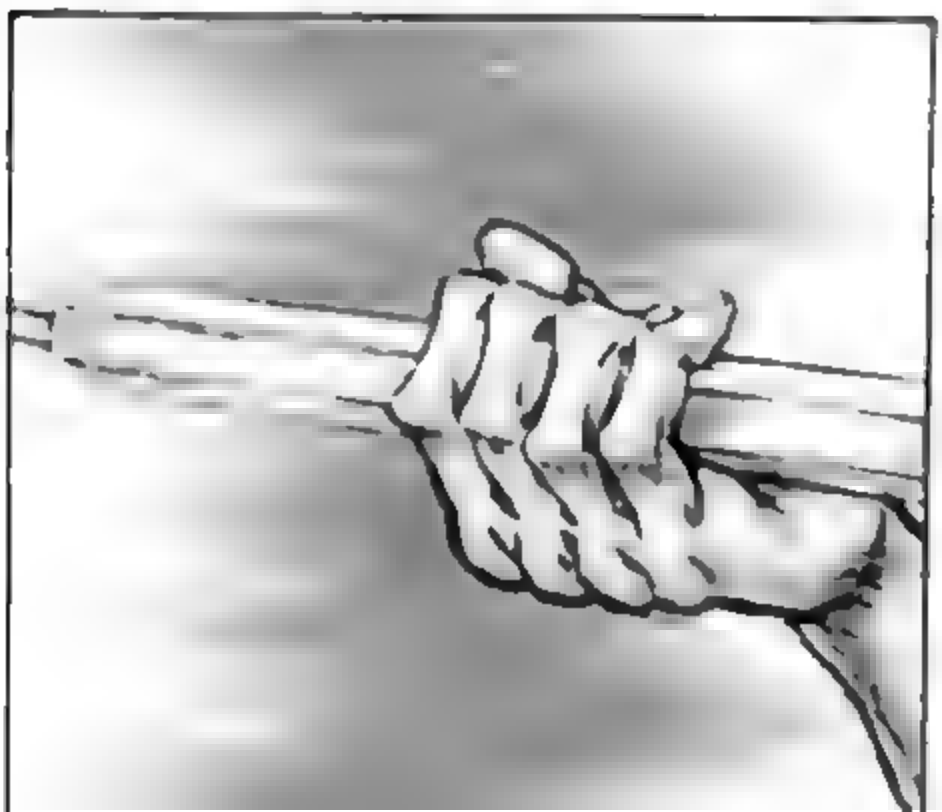
FUJ'KI GENNOSUKE RECEIVED FROM KAKEGAWA,

A SINGLE LONG SWORD

FORGED IN BIZEN BY AN UNKNOWN SWORD-SMITH.

IT WAS THE TIGER-KILLING NANACHOU NENBUTSU





YOU ARE INDEED THE DAUGHTER OF NOUBI'S UNRIVALED IWAMOTO KOGAN-SENSEI

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL TECHNIQUE.

NO, IT'S MAGNIFICENT, YOU ARE MORE SKILLFUL THAN FUJIKI-DONO.

YOU EMBAR-RASS ME.

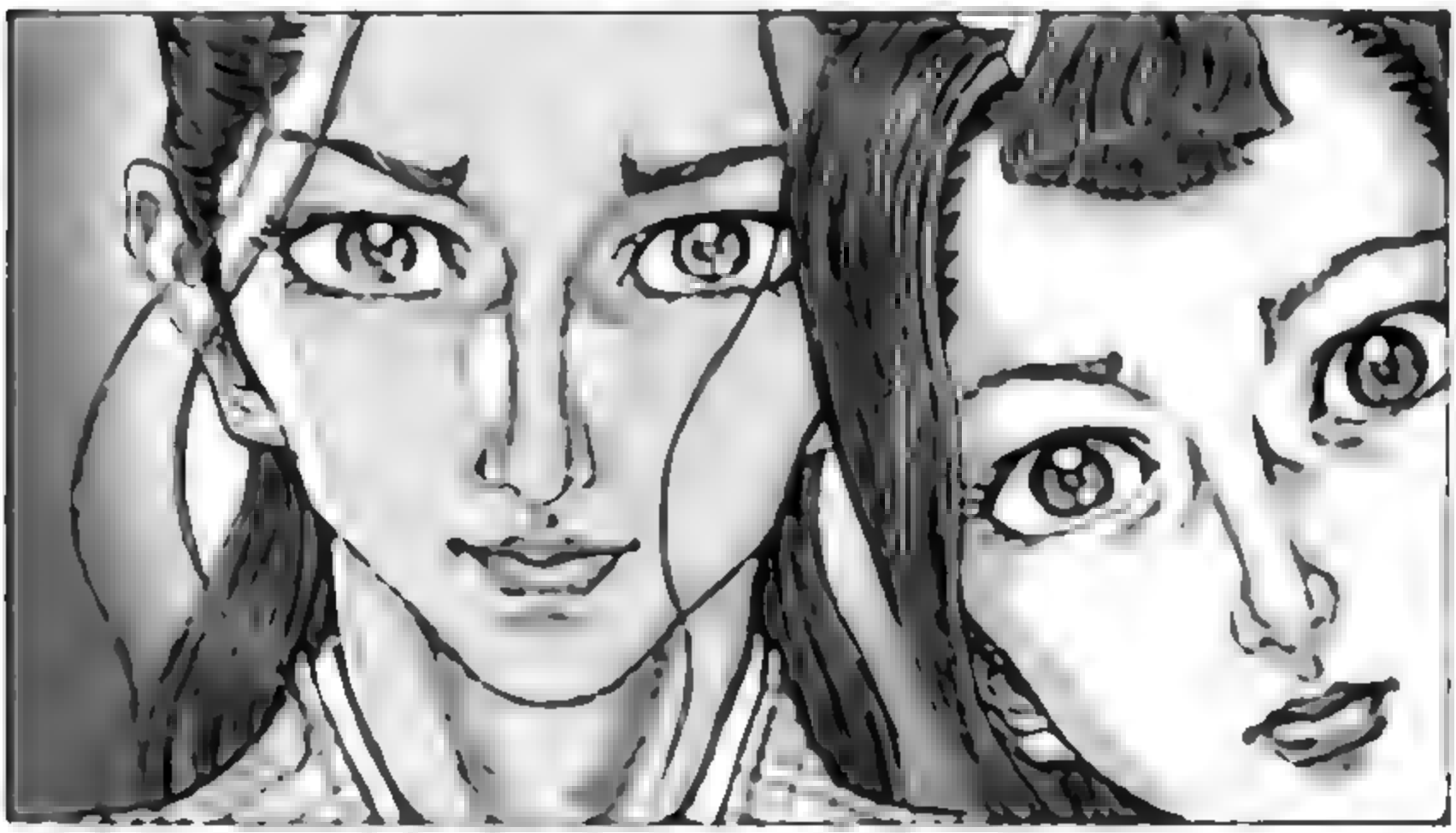
FOR THINKING ONLY OF KILLING IRAKO SEIGEN.

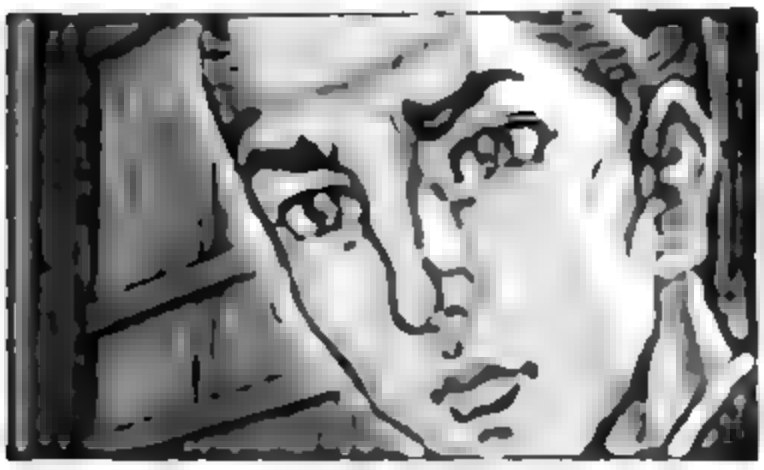
PLEASE FORGIVE HIM.

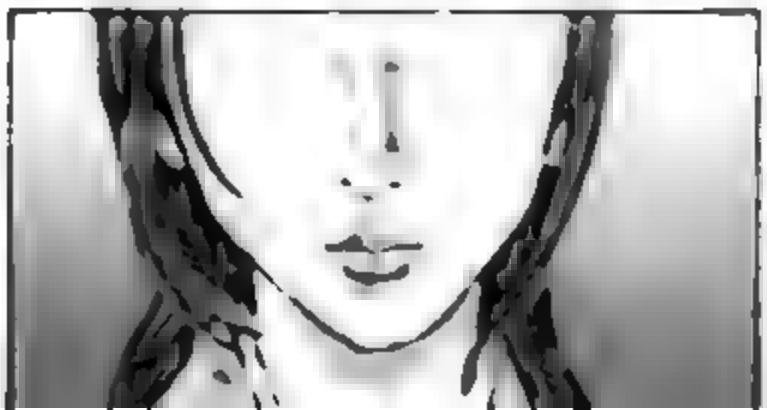
ONCE WERE FELLOW STUDENTS IN THE SAME DOJO.

I HAVE HEARD THAT FUJIKI-DONO AND IRAKO SEIGEN,

WHAT KIND OF STUDENT WAS IRAKO SEIGEN?







IS NOT SUITED TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD.

FROM MORNING TIL NIGHT, ALL THE DISCIPLES OF KOGAN-

ENDURED INTENSE PRACTICE SESSIONS IN THE DOJO.

ONLY THOSE WHO OFFER THE MOST BLOOD AND SWEAT ARE SUITED TO BECOME MASTERS OF THE SWORD.

IN ORDER TO EXCEL, EVEN AFTER PRACTICE WAS OVER,

THEY TORMENTED THEMSELVES WITH FURTHER TRAINING.

THAT WOULD FIND HIMSELF A COOL SPOT.

BUT AS SOON AS PRACTICE IN THE DOJO ENDED.

AND SQUANDER HIS DAYS IN IDLENESS.

EVEN SO,

HIS ABILITY WITH THE SWORD ...

THAT WRETCH,

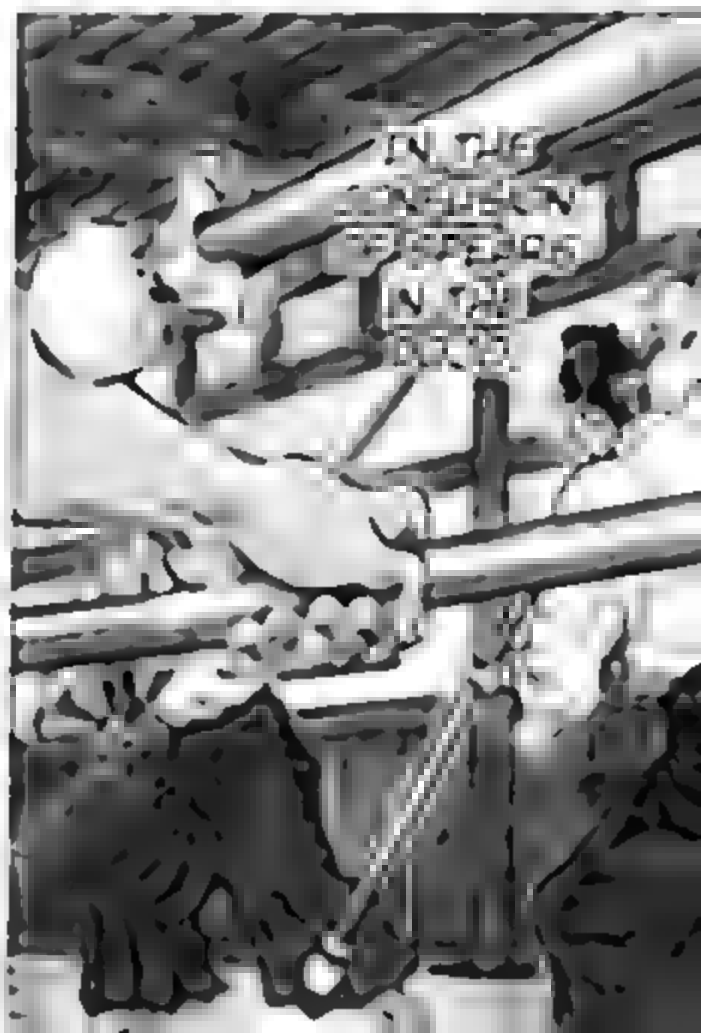
DEFILES THE MASTERS OF THE SWORD.

EVERYONE SAID BEHIND MY BACK THAT I WAS CONCEITED AND LAZY.

BUT THE TRUTH IS...

I WAS EVEN MORE LIKE THAT.

I WAS
DESPERATE


IN THE

AS IF I WERE ON A BATTLEFIELD.

IT IS PROBABLY THE SAME WITH [illegible] SEIKEN...

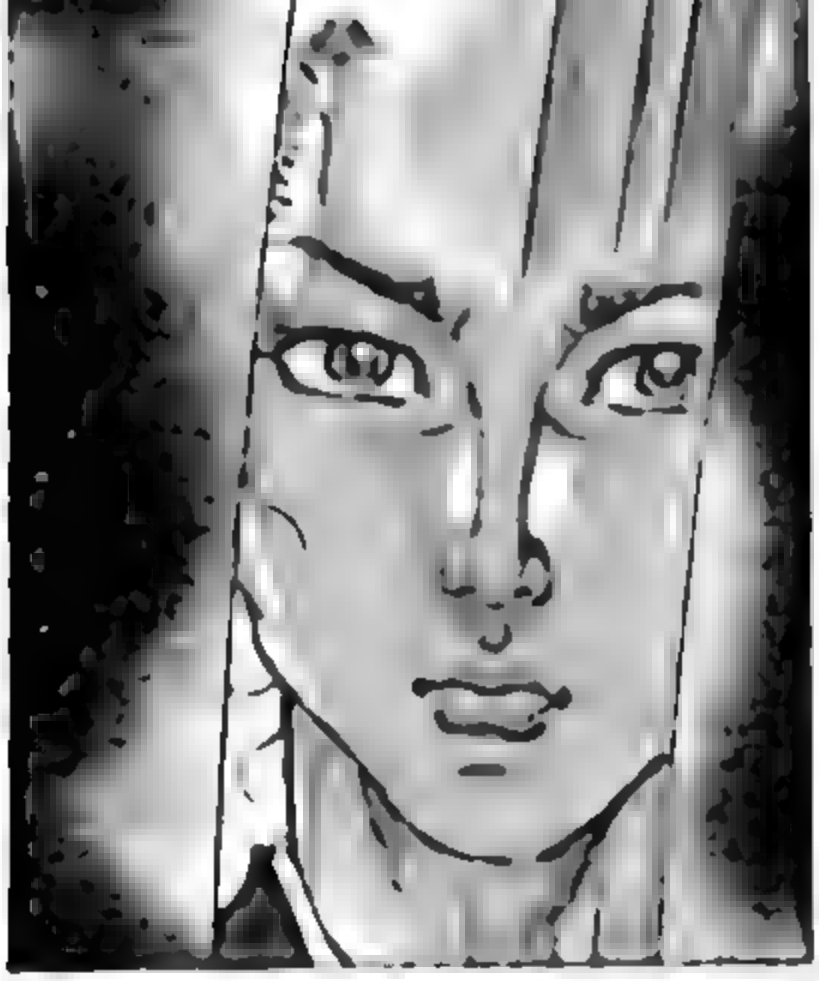
I HAD NO STRENGTH TO SPEAK

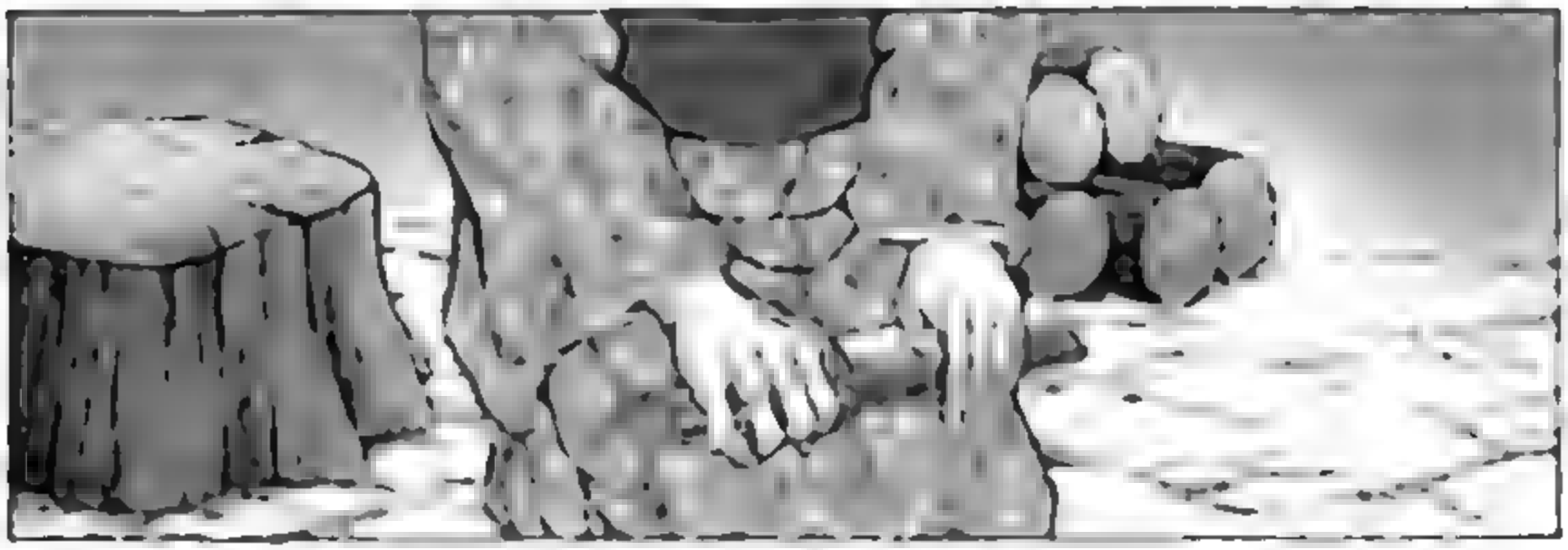
FUJIKI
...

AND WHAT OF FUJIKI-DONO?

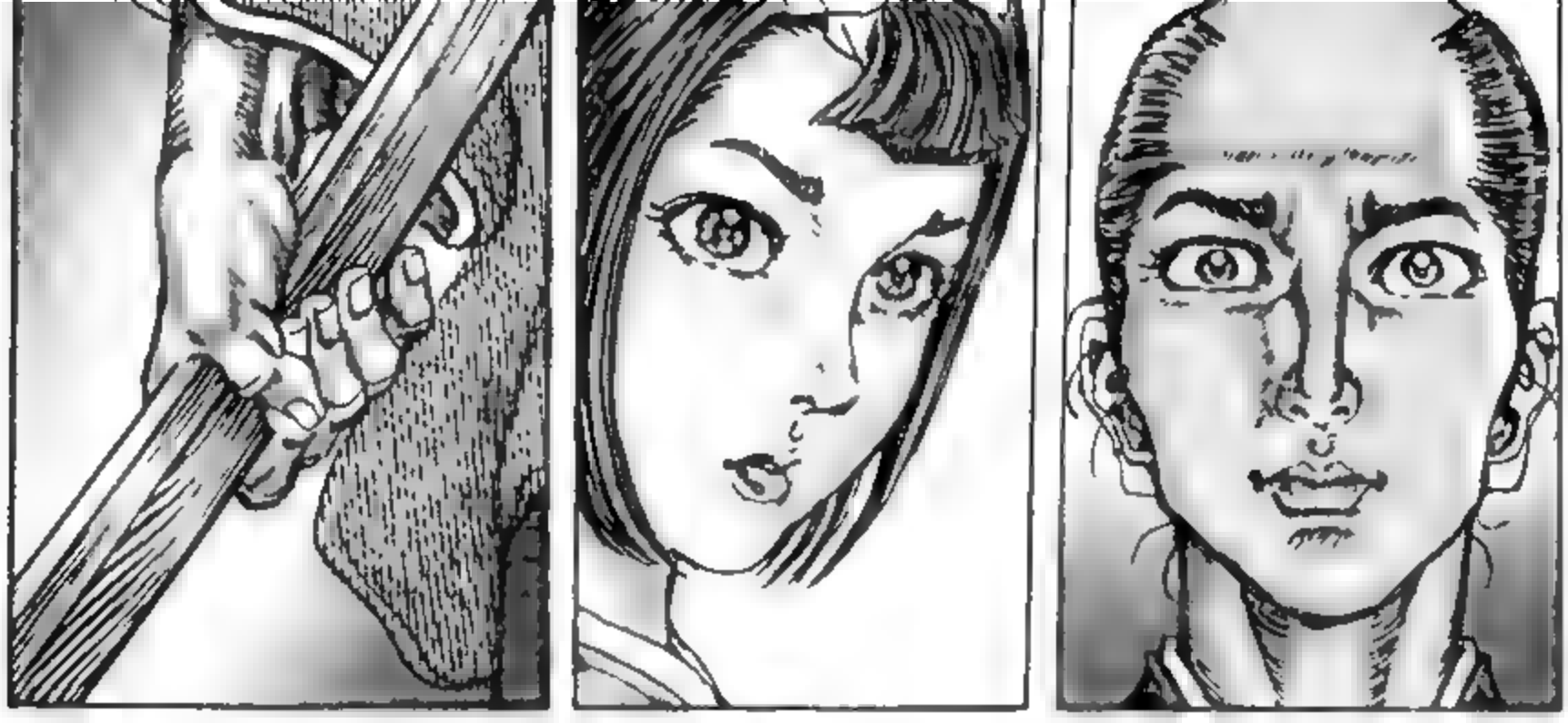
HOW SHALL I PUT IT?

AFTER PRACTICE, HE WOULD STARE DETERMINEDLY AT HIS SWORD

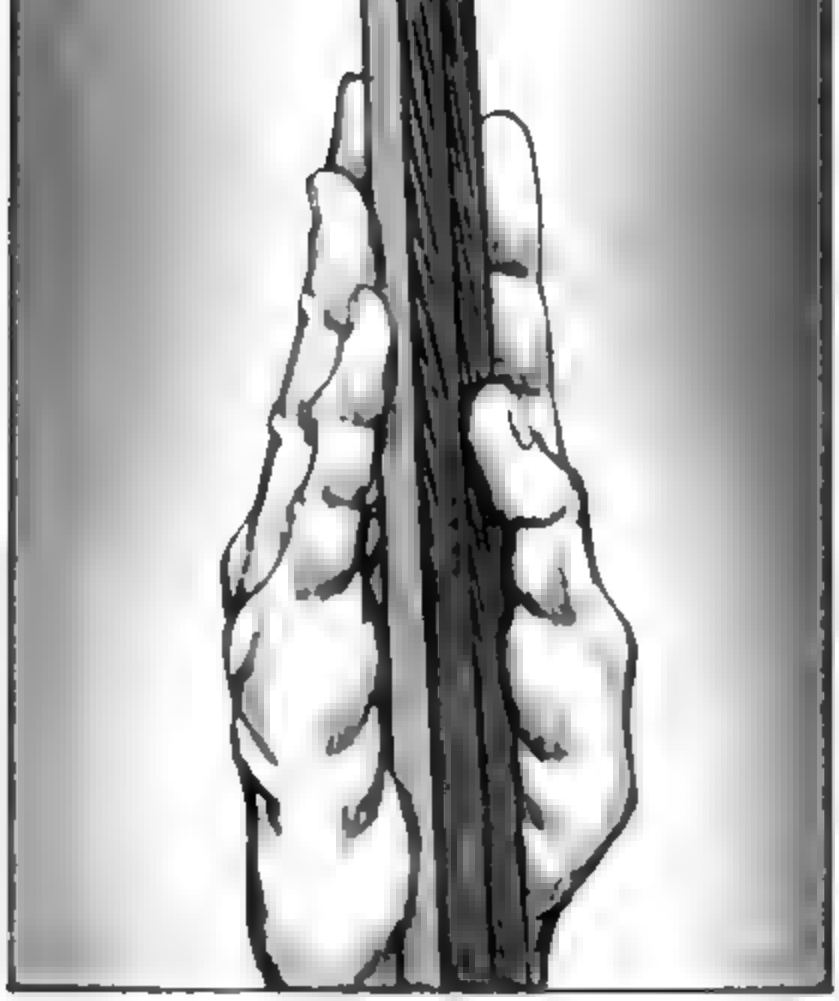


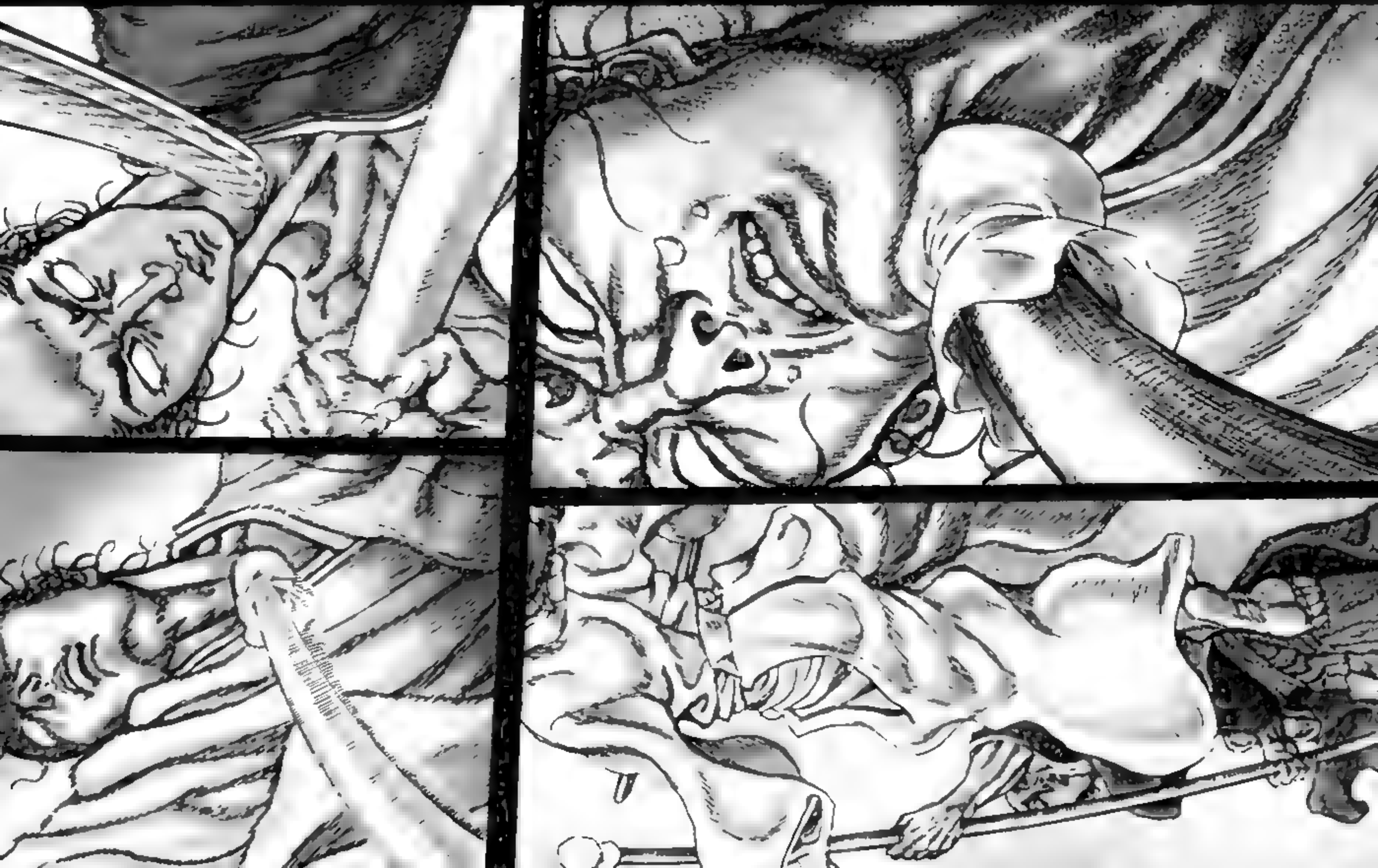


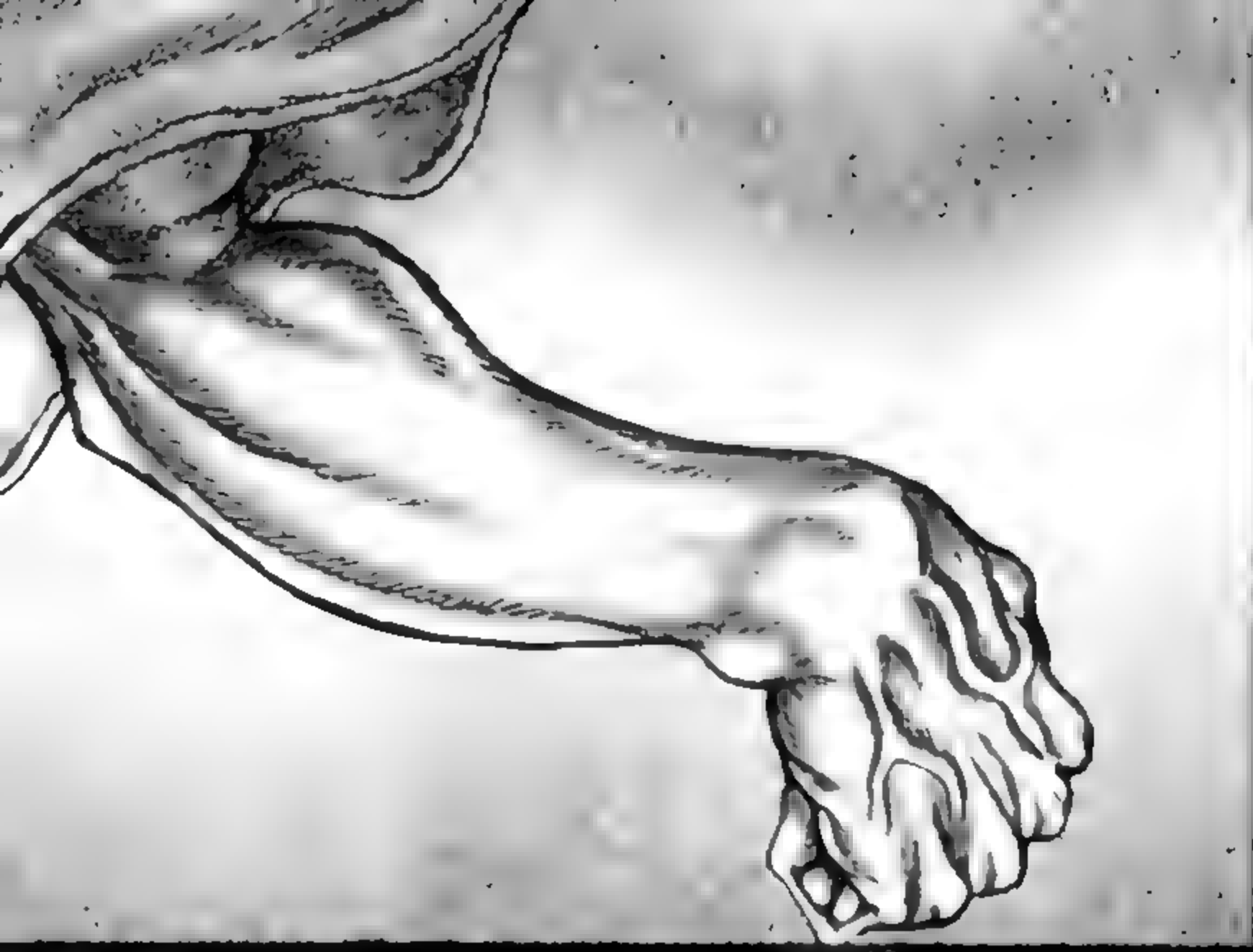
SASA-
HARA-
CHO



I HAVE DEVISED A PLAN.







GENNOSUKE WAS IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE.

NO,

THERE WAS THE WOODEN SWORD HE HAD THROWN AWAY.

カラ

Throwing away your sword, that's heresy!

THIS TECHNIQUE, DEVISED WITH DEMONIC TENACITY,

DECEIVED EVEN SASAHARA SHUUZA-BUROU'S EYES.

AT AN OFFICIAL TOURNA-MENT!

ARE YOU INSANE?!

"Let them show their skill in martial arts using live steel."

THE ORDER TO HOLD THE TOURNAMENT IN SUNPU CASTLE USING REAL SWORDS WAS GIVEN,

IN APRIL OF THAT YEAR.

"SHIGURUI" Vol. 13 / END